

Protesters Rally to Denounce White Supremacist Addressing Students

Protesters chanting “Go home Nazis” sought to drown out the speech by a white nationalist at the University of Florida on Thursday, as the campus erected barricades and deployed hundreds of police officers to guard against unrest.

Richard Spencer’s event at the university in Gainesville, which prompted the governor to declare a state of emergency to prepare for possible violence, comes about two months after rallies by neo-Nazis and white supremacists in Charlottesville, Virginia, led to a deadly clash with counter-protesters.

The violence on Aug. 12 added fuel to a national debate on race, and Republican President Donald Trump came under fire for blaming both sides for the melee.

On Thursday, several hundred protesters marched outside a campus performing arts center ahead of the speech there by Spencer, who heads the National Policy Institute, a nationalist think tank.

Amid heavy police presence, demonstrators taking part in the rally chanted “Stand up, fight back” and “Go home, Spencer.” A plane flew overhead with a sign that read “Love conquers hate! Love will prevail!”

A man hired as security for media was arrested for illegally carrying a firearm on campus, the Alachua County Sheriff’s Office said.

Inside the venue, Spencer and protesters yelled at one another.

"I'm not going home," Spencer said. "We are stronger than you, and you all know it!"

About 15 white men, all dressed in white shirts and khaki pants, raised their hands when Spencer asked who identified with the alt-right, a loose grouping characterized by a rejection of mainstream politics that includes neo-Nazis, white supremacists and anti-Semites.

The university said it did not invite Spencer to speak but was obligated by law to allow the event. The school said it will spend more than \$500,000 on security, and the National Policy Institute is paying more than \$10,000 to rent the facility and for security within the venue.

Classes at the university were held except for those in close proximity to the speech venue. But many students were staying away from campus, said Wes Li, a 20-year-old philosophy major.

"It's very tense and upsetting," Li said.

The Southern Poverty Law Center, which monitors U.S. hate groups, said Spencer is "a radical white separatist whose goal is the establishment of a white ethno-state in North America."

An outspoken supporter of Trump during the 2016 campaign, Spencer rose from relative obscurity after widely circulated videos showed some Trump supporters giving Nazi-style salutes to Spencer during a gathering in Washington to celebrate the Republican candidate's win. Trump condemned the meeting.

University President Kent Fuchs urged students not to attend the event and denounced Spencer's white nationalism.

"I stand with those who reject and condemn Spencer's vile and despicable message," Fuchs said on Twitter on Thursday.

The death in Charlottesville, home to the flagship campus of the University of Virginia, occurred as counter-protesters were dispersing. A 20-year-old man who is said by law

enforcement to have harbored Nazi sympathies smashed his car into the crowd, killing a 32-year-old woman. {eo}

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