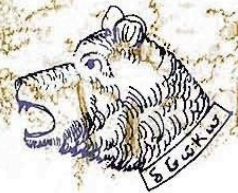


# Order of the Golden Bear



The topic of tonight's discussion concerned demonstrations and the community response, especially the Black Lives Matter protests that occurred on campus and in the nearby community toward the end of the fall semester of 2014.

Some Fellows asserted the right to protest but questioned the methods during these demonstrations: if you are blocking traffic, disrupting people's lives, and pissing people off, are you getting your message across? A Fellow also argued that we have the right to "peaceably assemble" rather than a right to protest, which lawfully prohibits disruptions to society.

On the other hand, some Fellows questioned what is worth spending our breath debating (tearing down those trying to turn attention to a huge social dilemma or the problem itself?) and turned to the motivation behind the protests to examine the incidents during the local protests and solutions to policing issues and promote peaceful, meaningful demonstrations. Many Fellows pointed to the fact that an unarmed black man is killed by police or a vigilante every 28 hours, a problem that far outweighs freeway obstructions. A Fellow described their experiences at these protests, including Berkeley Police Department officers pushing protesters away from their station, beating fellow students that were trying to protect police officers in the back, tossing tear gas canisters at her feet, being at the ready to beat protesters rather than protect property, and pushing back barefoot, innocent protesters one to two miles away from the original scene. Another Fellow described how police officers pointed rifles stationed to protect the Wells Fargo at Center and Shattuck pointed rifles at an elderly couple walking from Zellerbach and two Associated Press reporters because they determined it was a good, quick strategy to get rid of people. Another Fellow mentioned that they had to intervene when a young white man was shouting at a police officer extremely close to his face, explaining that a black man would be more likely to be beaten or shot under the same circumstances. They also pointed to a woman who had to drop out of school due to four concussions from the protests. Many Fellows spoke out against police militarization and in favor of community policing techniques.

Some Fellows countered the argument against disruption of daily life by using the example of Mario Savio, an icon for the University community who said we have got to "put our bodies on the gears" of the machine "when the operation of the machine becomes so odious." Fellows, therefore, argued that demonstrations including blocking the freeway might be necessary to bring light to the issue. Fellows pointed to the role of white anarchists in undermining the message of the protests. Some Fellows noted how the media mainly focused on

those who led the violence and only showed the mass of peaceful protestors once or twice during several hours of a live broadcast.

Fellows also discussed the issue of privilege. Some Fellows argued that the “inconvenience” of the protest comes from a place of privilege to ignore the issues at hand. Some Fellows also said they were disgusted when people from privileged roles usurped the power of the protest; for example, people taking a selfie while flipping off the police. Fellows also discussed the role of social media, saying Yik Yak (an anonymous location-based forum) was both interesting and scary as a way to quickly spread information (some false) to a large number of people. Many Fellows expressed the importance of participating in protests as allies, but doing so in an intelligent manner. Some Fellows requested that allies to please participate in protests and support the work of those who have a vested interest in the problem and are leading the movement, but also be sure not to co-opt the movement and dilute the message, such may be said of the shift in focus from “Black Lives Matter” to student wellbeing during the protests.

Fellows suggested there are structural issues in the community that led or aggravated the incidents during the local protests. A Fellow pointed to the troubled history of mutual aid in Berkeley protests since police officers from other places are not trained to deal with student protests, something very different from a riot. They also mentioned that the campus community had the exact same discussion in the wake of the Occupy Cal protests in 2011, but we are still making the same mistakes. Some Fellows also addressed a perceived divide between students and administrators, noting that the administrators are quick to sell the campus as the “home of free speech” but have not been working with the Black Student Union like they said they would and merely addressed campus traffic and safety concerns rather than the core social justice issue at hand.

Some Fellows turned to find solutions to help solve issues surrounding these student protests. Some Fellows suggested that the daytime protests would be more impactful than nighttime protests because the night implicitly invites fringe elements that can potentially hijack the message. They also recommended that protestors recognize the humanity of police officers and appeal to create a solution to build better community relations together. Many Fellows pointed to the lack of representation of students in the media, hoping that students may find a platform to express a message with the same force as that of the police.

Fellows also focused on the positive aspects of some of the protests. Some Fellows pointed to the Black Student Union’s takeover of the Golden Bear Café, well organized with union representatives, for 4.5 hours to represent the time that Michael Brown’s body was left out in the street in Ferguson. This protest may not have been as disruptive as blocking the freeway, but still disruptive of everyday life on campus. Fellows also noted the success of Black Brunch, interrupting brunch for two minutes to reflect on the lives of those that will never go back to their families, and a daytime weekend march down College Avenue.