



Peace and Justice Commission

CONSENT CALENDAR  
March 24, 2026

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
From: Peace and Justice Commission  
Submitted by: Reverend Dwayne Phillips, Chairperson, Peace and Justice Commission  
Subject: Re-affirm City of Berkeley Commitment to Free Speech

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt this recommendation re-affirming the City of Berkeley's commitment to Free Speech and Assembly and its opposition to the detainment and deportation of immigrants without due process, violating their constitutionally protected speech.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

Minimal.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Since the beginning of his second administration, President Trump has begun a systematic dismantling of due process rights that threaten the safety of both American citizens and those legally in the United States.

BACKGROUND

On March 8th, Federal Immigration officers dressed in plain clothes illegally detained Mahmoud Khalil, a legal green card holder married to an American citizen, and former Columbia University student, sending him to an ICE detention facility in Louisiana without charge. He faces deportation for his political activism.

The following week, Badar Khan Suri, a visiting scholar at Georgetown University married to an American citizen, was detained and his visa revoked by ICE in retaliation for his wife's political activism. He similarly has not been charged with a crime and is slated for deportation.

In late March, Rumeya Ozturk, a Tufts Ph.D. student, was also detained by plain clothes ICE agents over an op-ed article she wrote for her school newspaper objecting to the University's response to the war in Gaza in early 2024. She has not been charged with a crime and slated for deportation.

State Department Secretary Marco Rubio recently said he had revoked "300 visas" on similar grounds, having used AI and other surveillance technologies to identify students who took part in protests.

In 2024, UC Berkeley was the site of numerous peaceful demonstrations that included both domestic and international students. The Trump administration's current posture of detaining and deporting without charge students who are in the country legally on the basis of their constitutionally protected right to free speech and assembly threatens the fabric of the Berkeley community. It has created a culture of extreme fear reminiscent of the McCarthy era when countless individuals were targeted without evidence over speculation around their political beliefs.

While the Trump administration has said that these detentions are a part of a wider effort to combat antisemitism on college campuses, 100 Jewish faculty from UC Berkeley signed a letter in March and called on all members of the community to denounce the practice<sup>1</sup>.

Student activists are far from the only population being targeted. The Trump administration is also targeting people for a wide range of non-criminal behavior including union organizing. There have even been instances of green card holders being detained at their routine immigration check-ins. As a part of their crack-down, there have already been a number of erroneous detentions and deportations, including of Kilmar Abrego Garcia who was deported to El Salvador's CECOT prison due to "an administrative error" despite having been granted protection from deportation. Jeanette Vizguera, an immigrant rights activist, was detained by ICE at work, again without charge. Julio Noriego, an American Citizen, was also detained in an ICE sweep.

At least six UC Berkeley students have had their visas revoked as a part of the Trump administration's sweeps.

On March 25th, 2025, Alfredo Juarez, a community activist and Farm Worker, was driving his wife to work when he was randomly stopped by ICE Agents. When he attempted to get his ID, after being asked for it, ICE Agents smashed his window and detained him. He currently faces no charges, but is detained in the Northwest ICE Processing Center in Tacoma.

Lewelyn Dixon, a Green Card holder who has lived in the US for 50 years was returning from an international trip and was detained while going through customs to come home. She was detained because of an embezzlement charge that was resolved 20 years ago. She has travelled internationally many times, but this time when she tried to come home she was detained, and is being held at the Northwest ICE Processing Center.

The Trump Administration has promised that this is just the beginning of their detention and deportation plan.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1w6bTVUMmUvW\\_HQZ-1T7vZc82spx25k0b/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1w6bTVUMmUvW_HQZ-1T7vZc82spx25k0b/view)

The First Amendment's position at the top of the Bill of Rights enshrines it as one of the most important protections anyone residing in the United States –citizen or non-citizen – is entitled to. Erosion of this protection for any reason is a threat to one of American democracy's central pillars. This erosion moves us dangerously close to an autocratic state that threatens everyone regardless of political creed or citizenship status.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

None.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Berkeley's history as the epicenter of the 1960s Free Speech movement is a core part of our City's identity. It is morally right for us to stand up and oppose practices that threaten all of us.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

The commission considered not commenting on the rise of disappearances and visa/green card revocations.

The commission considered taking no stance against the egregious violations of our constitutional protections, including in Berkeley.

CITY MANAGER

The City Manager takes no position on the content and recommendations of the Commission's Report.

CONTACT PERSON

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