

Useful Information Regarding Charles Murray's Middlebury Visit March 2, 2017

We recognize some Middlebury volunteers may be asked about events surrounding the Charles Murray appearance at Middlebury College on March 2. This fact sheet should help you answer any questions you may have or that you may receive.

Why did Charles Murray come to Middlebury?

- 1) Charles Murray was invited to speak at Middlebury College by the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) Club—an official student organization. Mr. Murray is a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and the author, most recently, of the book *Coming Apart*, which was the subject of his talk. The College did not fund Mr. Murray's appearance.
- 2) Under Middlebury College policy, it was the AEI Club's right to invite Charles Murray, just as it is the right of other students to invite speakers with different political views and opinions.
- 3) The political science department agreed to co-sponsor the event, as it does whenever a student organization makes a request for sponsorship and the department chair determines it is related to political science and would be of interest to a significant part of the community. Co-sponsorship is not the same as funding or endorsement of the speaker's views, research, or writings, but rather an expression of support for students' desire to bring speakers of various perspectives to campus.
- 4) Middlebury honors freedom of thought and expression. Mr. Murray's visit does not indicate an endorsement of Murray's views by the College. It is a recognition that Middlebury—and all institutions of higher education—must be a place for the free exchange of ideas.

What happened?

- 1) Student protesters disrupted Mr. Murray's talk in Wilson Hall, making it impossible for him to continue.
- 2) After about 20 minutes, the talk was moved to a different room, where a video studio was set up for the purpose of live streaming the event. A recording is available online. Protests continued, both in Wilson Hall and outside McCullough.
- 3) When Mr. Murray, accompanied by Professor of Political Science Allison Stanger and Vice President for Communications Bill Burger, was leaving the building, his group was surrounded by a group of protesters from on and off campus who impeded their departure. A protestor grabbed Professor Stanger by the hair and her neck was wrenched. She later experienced neck pain and was treated at the emergency room in Middlebury.
- 4) Mr. Murray, Professor Stanger, and Bill Burger got into Mr. Burger's car. Protesters then rocked the car, slammed the windows and hood, and threw a traffic sign in front of the car as it attempted to leave. The car is now covered in scratches and dents.

- 5) Because the violent encounter happened outside after dark, it was difficult to see the protestors' faces. It is unclear at this point how many of the protestors were from outside of Middlebury versus our own students.
- 6) The incident is under investigation by the Middlebury Police Department and Middlebury College Public Safety.

How is Middlebury responding to the protest?

- 1) On Friday, March 3, President Patton [released a statement](#) describing the events of the previous afternoon and evening.
- 2) On Monday, March 6, President Patton [announced in an all-campus letter](#) that the College is now focused on both accountability for the protestors' behavior as well as community-building to help repair a large campus divide highlighted by these events.
- 3) Middlebury has hired an independent investigator to establish an understanding of what took place at the protest. Students who did not follow the rules as laid out in the College's handbook and announced at the event will be subject to sanctions through the College judicial process.
- 4) The Middlebury Police Department is investigating the events that took place outside after the event.
- 5) Middlebury will also address the deep divisions that this incident reveals. We will ensure a climate of open discourse as a core Middlebury value. We will recognize critical matters of race, inclusion, class, sexual and gender identity, and other factors that too often divide us.
- 6) Many students, faculty, and staff members, representing a large spectrum of political perspectives, have offered to help us in this work.
- 7) President Patton remains steadfast in her commitment to the safety of all members of our campus community.
- 8) President Patton will continue to uphold the principle of freedom of speech in the context of rigorous but respectful dialogue on difficult topics.
- 9) This work will take time, but President Patton will keep alumni informed of next steps.

This incident has been widely covered in the media. Several well-reported pieces include:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/07/opinion/smothering-speech-at-middlebury.html>

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2017/03/04/middlebury/hAfpA1Hquh7DIS1doiKbhJ/story.html>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/03/middlebury-free-speech-violence/518667/>

Middlebury Professor of Political Science Matthew Dickinson's blog gives a thorough account of the incident and its internal as well as external ramifications:

<http://sites.middlebury.edu/presidentialpower/2017/03/04/murray-and-middlebury-what-happened-and-what-should-be-done/>