Do you believe the university should hold up “its end of the bargain” in hosting a speaker like Spencer, who other universities have argued, poses a threat to the safety and security on campus?

I believe Spencer is a nuisance without any real following here in Ann Arbor. So, I really don’t see any bargain that the university has to uphold since he’s inviting himself. Also, UM officials have rescinded invitations before. They rescinded an offer for a Black woman author, Alice Walker, to speak on campus in 2013 because of her criticisms of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. This was most likely due to pressure from some donors and alumni. I would be disappointed to learn there was more pressure to rescind a speaking invitation for a prize winning African American author than there would be for a white nationalist who wants to invite himself to speak.

Also, these events tend to attract white nationalists and white supremacists who are willing to commit acts of violence against anti-racist activists. Three self-identified Nazis shot at protesters after Richard Spencer’s talk at the University of Florida. People like that aren’t interested in any political debate. No one is forcing Spencer to take responsibility for that, either.

Allowing Richard Spencer to invite himself to speak on campus would be a terrible waste of financial and human resources. Why pay tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of dollars for security when that money could go towards something more productive? I’d rather see that money go towards more scholarships or towards paying a living wage for part-time lecturers and staff.

Do you feel like a speaker who has a message like Spencer’s should be allowed a space to speak in the public, or should his message of hate be limited?

I cannot determine whether or not Spencer can speak in public. However, we should keep in mind white nationalists’ and white supremacists’ intent for organizing these events. They are about trying to organize and project power they don’t have. These type of folks are in the minority. So, when you’re small, you just try to get loud and cause controversy.

Also, they’re trying to use the first amendment as a Trojan Horse. At best, they’re trying to troll, or “trigger,” people they oppose, and at worst, they’re trying to use “freedom of speech” to smuggle historically violent ideas into the public sphere. We have to remember—Spencer is advocating for a white “ethno-state.” Such an ideology is not about peaceably creating a “separate” white nation. This ideology amounts to a declaration of war if white nationalists like Spencer are ever able to acquire enough support and power. Such an endeavor would require ethnic cleansing and mass deportation. So, even if I think Spencer is a joke, I don’t believe white nationalist and white supremacist ideologies are a joke. When organized and in power, these people have used violence to terrorize minorities in this country. But, if Spencer wants to talk about the violent ramifications of his beliefs in a real public place, without hiding behind the University of Michigan for his security, then so be it. But, he should be willing to actually face his opposition.

In light of what happened in Charlottesville, does the idea of bringing a speaker like Spencer to campus concern you at all?

I am concerned about two things when it comes to allowing someone like Spencer speak on campus—his events tend to attract violent white nationalists and supremacists. We saw this in Charlottesville and at the University of Florida. And, because of that, his events tend to attract more law enforcement. I see the presence of white supremacists and nationalists and more law enforcement as a threat to African Americans and other students of color who may oppose people like Spencer.