

Seattle Protest Report

By Jonah Lehto (Seattle, July 6) Around 1:30 am on July 4th, a white Jaguar evaded police blockades on I-5 and, protesters say, accelerated and careened toward Black Femme protesters, sending bodies flying into the air. Two protesters landed in ICU and one died. The motorist was stopped by other police blockades two miles away and is being held on multiple felony charges of vehicular assault.

Media and critics immediately jumped to the defense of the unidentified motorist, arguing that protesters should not be in the streets. The police spokesperson went so far as to call protesters blocking roads "criminals" who will now be arrested because police "can no longer guarantee their safety." Protesters have responded by saying that they have been attacked by vehicles on all roads, including a policewoman who drove into a protest on Saturday. That matter is currently under police review.

The police response of calling entire groups of protesters engaging in civil disobedience "criminals" who will now be arrested ignores the fact that protesters never claimed the right to be free from arrest, nor did they ask police to block roads. Instead they were prepared to go to jail for justice, but the police refused for 20 days of daily protests to make arrests.

This is analogous to police firing on entire groups of protesters with tear gas and rubber bullets instead of arresting, as the federal judge pointed out, any alleged throwers of water bottles. In both cases, the police show a clear preference for treating all protesters as criminals to be either shot at or condemned rather than as peaceful protesters willing to go to jail for justice.

Consistently throughout the history of CHOP, police have acted to create situations and then blamed victims. Their responses and behavior is tantamount to bullying, because bullies lash out and blame victims for causing their behaviors.

In other news, Police have subpoenaed many news stations for raw footage of protesters, which media are resisting in court on grounds of first amendment rights and creating danger for journalists if they are perceived as police informants taking footage. Police appear to have media between a rock and a hard place, because if media doesn't cooperate with police then

police may reduce or stop giving information to selected media that is important for daily news coverage.

A large march on the night of the 3rd was held where around three thousand LGBTQ protesters marched to Durkan's home in support of Black Lives Matter and against the scrubbing of the CHOP. For them, the night ended peacefully, as the block party atmosphere of the CHOP carried on throughout their entire march.

Local media like the Stranger speculates that the spray paint defacement of the mayor's mansion gate during a late June March to the mayor's house made the mayor white hot and led to the order to dissolve CHOP. The mayor has also called for investigations of Kshama Sawant (the socialist party council person for the district including CHOP) on the grounds that she may have cooperated with protesters and/or disclosed the mayor's address. Left unaddressed is the adequacy of police protection of the mayor's home, given its defacement. If the police are either unwilling or unable to protect the mayor, here again it appears to be police action and inaction that actually drives events in Seattle.