

Seattle Protest Report

By Jonah Lehto

(Seattle, July 9) Daily Black Lives Matter protests continue in Seattle, and touching memorials to Summer Taylor, killed on I-5 by a motorist swerving around barriers closing the road, are piling up in the Seattle Times and on the streets. In front of Urban Animal where Summer worked and cared for animals flowers and candles abound.

The driver of the white Jaguar is reported to have admitted drug addiction and his high profile attorney John Henry Brown reports his client is in tears and distraught. The mother of Summer Taylor recalled that Summer originally didn't want to leave the house because of pandemic, but felt called to the protests. Their mother noted that Summer's injuries from pepper spray and tear gas caused their family concern but she acknowledged that black people deal with this dread every day, and asked that the work of Black Lives Matter should carry on.

In stark contrast a sherriff's deputy was placed on administrative leave for posting in reference to Summer Taylor "ALL LIVES SPLATTER: Stay off the [expletive] roads." Numerous police friends reportedly liked this post. Governor Inslee condemned the posting, even though the deputy in question is his cousin as well as a deputy assigned to the protection detail for King County Executive Dow Constantine.

Summer Taylor's father calls for the firing of the deputy, saying, "That guy needs to be fired now. I think anybody who was liking it, sharing it or doing anything else with it should be fired. I think that's beyond obvious. It's disgusting and it's unfathomable to me."

Hundreds of Seattle city blocks are closed to through traffic with cones and signs so that families with children may play in the roads. Similarly, the police chose to close I-5 so that the protesters would have nothing but empty highways and no audience to protest in front

of. It seems beyond dispute that anybody killed on a residential road by a barrier evading motorist would not be responded to with All Lives Splatter, stay off the roads. In both cases the police and Transportation departments facilitated the road closures without request from residents or protesters.

The CHOP's Black Lives Matter road mural, one of the most notable artistic accomplishments of the protest, was given suddenly given a layer of clear Thompson's Water Seal by the Central Area Chamber of Commerce President, sealing road dirt and grime permanently into the mural's appearance. The artists had made plans with the city to clean the art, touch it up and then seal it.

The artists, are a group called the Vivid Matter Collective. They expressed their frustrations:

"WE DID NOT GIVE SEATTLE POLICE DEPARTMENT (SPD) OR LAWRENCE PITRE (LP) PERMISSION TO SEAL THE BLM MURAL," said an Instagram post from one artist. "[Lawrence Pitre was rude when confronted] and continued to seal in dirt with an oil-based varnish into the mural, permanently damaging the artwork."

Sealants are not meant to seal in imperfections or dirt, and indeed the instructions for any paint or sealant specify cleaning prior to sealant application, but the Chamber of Commerce President claims he just wanted to help.

Trolls in the comment section at the Stranger suggested the artists and CHOP got what they deserved, desecration for desecration, and that unauthorized graffiti isn't art anyway. The City had approved it to remain as street art but now it is sealed with dirt and tire tracks visible.

All sides in Seattle seem to agree on the preservation of the beautiful, though with some disagreements about what is or isn't beautiful.

The thornier questions are what to do about the uglier side of things, and what to do about humans whose defects are laid bare for all the

world to see, like the sheriffs deputy's nasty comment splattered on the walls of a family and a community's grief.