

New York police assault fundraiser for anarchist group

Jamie Chapman
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New York City police launched a vicious attack on a private fundraising event for the group, Anarchist People of Color, at 2:00 a.m. on Sunday, November 16. The benefit was being held in the Brooklyn offices of Critical Resistance, a California-based group that focuses on police brutality and the prison system.

According to one of the partygoers, the incident was precipitated when three officers in plain clothes approached to investigate an alleged report of someone standing outside the front door drinking from an open container, making an assumption that the beverage the person was drinking contained alcohol. (It is illegal to drink alcohol out of doors in most US jurisdictions.)

The police requested and were given identification from the person outside, as well as from several others who had come out of the party to find out what was happening. When the officers started to walk away without returning any identification, and the people demanded their IDs back, a police riot commenced.

One of the benefit organizers, Mayuran Tiruchelvam, described the initial approach of the police. Speaking on Pacifica Radio's "Democracy Now!" the next morning, he explained: "I was at the front door when they came in. They just started threatening people, saying 'You're running an illegal nightclub!' They were throwing all these different accusations at us, but they never once clearly said what the problem was, why they were there, nor did they ask to be invited into the space." The plainclothes police refused repeated requests for their badge numbers, and no warrant was ever presented.

Even though the organizers responded peacefully to the police bullying, the cops had apparently already arranged for backup consisting of some 50 officers, who appeared in seconds. Witnesses counted at least 21 marked police cars plus several unmarked ones parked

nearby. This massive force then stormed inside into the party, swinging batons and spraying mace at everyone within range. Several people were injured severely enough to require hospitalization, and most of the some 100 people there suffered the effects of the pepper spray.

Eight people were arrested on charges including resisting arrest and inciting to riot. Two of those arrested required hospitalization, but were denied medical treatment until after being released late Sunday night. A press release issued by Critical Resistance indicates injuries included severe blows to the head, a spinal injury and bruised ribs.

The police also reported two of their number were injured, one being treated at a local hospital. Contacted by the WSWs, a police spokeswoman described the incident as "nothing unusual."

The circumstances surrounding this police operation are highly suspicious. Considering the NYPD's stated willingness to conduct surveillance of opposition groups, even in the absence of any evidence of criminal activity, it is quite possible the police knew about the party in advance and prepared their provocation accordingly. It is also possible that the police were generally aware that the Atlantic Avenue building was the headquarters for an anti-police group, and, when a patrol saw a party going on there, decided to move in.

In either case, a peaceful gathering was targeted for brutal treatment because of the political views of its participants. No residents of the building where the party was taking place, nor any neighbors, called in any complaints about noise. The only disturbance was caused by the police.

Sunday's police raid is particularly ominous in light of a recent *New York Times* report on the NYPD's plans to protect the Republican National

Convention—scheduled in New York City for just before the third anniversary of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks—from the protest demonstrations that are already being organized. The city’s deputy police commissioner for intelligence is David Cohen, a former high-level CIA official who was hired by Mayor Michael Bloomberg after 35 years with the CIA.

The New York Civil Liberties Union filed suit Wednesday to force the NYPD to abandon tactics used against the over 500,000-strong antiwar protest here last February 15, including police in riot gear blocking access to the protest to thousands of demonstrators, holding people for long periods on minor infractions with no access to toilets or water, the use of interlocking metal barricades to pen protesters in, and police on horseback charging into peaceful crowds causing injuries.

Significantly, only days before last February’s demonstration, the NYPD won court approval to remove most restrictions that had been placed on their political spying activities under a 1985 consent decree known as the Handschu agreement. Hundreds of protesters who were then detained on February 15 were required to give police information about their political affiliations. Police defended the practice by claiming they needed the information to plan for future protests.



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