Activist assaulted by Rand Paul supporters in Kentucky

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A video widely distributed on the Internet documents supporters of Rand Paul, the Republican and Tea Party-backed senate candidate in Kentucky, physically assaulting a liberal activist prior to a debate held on Monday in Lexington.

The victim, Lauren Valle, 23, a member of the pro-Democratic Party group MoveOn.org, was among a crowd of Paul supporters who had gathered at the site of the final debate of the election. As the candidate made his way into the debate hall, Valle attempted to present him with a satirical "employee-of-the-month award" from a fictional company called "RepubliCorp," used by MoveOn.org to draw attention to Republican candidates' ties to major corporations.

Video captured a number of Paul's supporters reacting to Valle's presence with evident rage. They violently forced Valle, a small woman who clearly posed no threat, to the ground. At least one man in the crowd then held her on the ground against her will, while another man holding a Rand Paul campaign sign stomped on her head, shoving her face into the concrete sidewalk. The assailant was later revealed to be Tim Profitt, a Paul campaign worker.

A clip of the attack can be viewed here.

It is clear that the force of the kick could have severely injured Valle. While Valle was able to speak with the local media following the incident, her face was left swollen and her neck and shoulders were hurt. She spent the night in a Lexington hospital with a concussion and a sprained shoulder.

The attack is another indication of the type of deranged and fascistic elements being mobilized by the Tea Party movement and its candidates as they seek to form a popular base for extreme right-wing politics in the US. The Tea Party appeals to the most backward sentiments—anti-immigrant chauvinism, militarism, racism, religious intolerance, anti-gay bigotry—with the full support of its corporate backers and the Republican Party establishment.

The vicious rhetoric espoused by leading figures in the Tea Party movement, including Rand Paul, has created a political climate that, in effect, sanctions and encourages attacks like the one carried out on Lauren Valle.

The emergence of the far-right, and the growing threat of violence it portends, cannot be fought through the Democratic Party. This is made clear by the immediate context in which the attack on Valle occurred, the Senate race in Kentucky, which has been a thoroughly reactionary affair in which the objective interests of the state's working class, devastated by the economic crisis, are completely blocked out.

Kentucky Attorney General Jack Conway, Paul's Democratic opponent in the election, has run a right-wing, anti-working class campaign in which he has attacked Paul from the right.

Conway is a millionaire, a supporter of the Iraq War, an advocate of the indefinite extension of the Bush tax cuts, an outspoken advocate of the death penalty, an opponent of gay marriage, and a steadfast ally of the state's coal companies.

Most recently, Conway has attempted to smear Paul by questioning his devotion to Christianity in a series of television attack ads.

It was revealed late Tuesday afternoon that the assailant filmed in the video is Profitt, who serves as Paul's campaign coordinator in Bourbon County. The Paul campaign said in a statement that is has "disassociated itself" from Profitt.

On Tuesday, Profitt was served with a summons to appear in court. Police have lodged fourth-degree assault charges against him.

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Profitt insisted the incident was not as bad as it looked and attempted to justify his actions. “I’m sorry that it came to that, and I apologize if it appeared overly forceful, but I was concerned about Rand’s safety,” he told the Associated Press.

In comments to the Huffington Post, Valle said she sensed the assault might have been premeditated. Several people came up behind her before the attack, and she said she heard one of them say, “We are here to do crowd control (and) we might have to take someone out.”

“One or two people twisted my arms behind my back and took me down,” Valle wrote. “It was about two-to-three seconds after that that another person stomped on my head.”

Police said that Rand supporters had earlier fingered Valle as a threat, but said that they declined to act because she had not done anything illegal. “It’s not illegal to take a picture with somebody,” Lexington police spokesperson Sherelle Roberts said.

Another Conway supporter said he was also threatened by Paul campaign workers at the event. Michael J. Grossman, described by the *Lexington Herald-Leader* as “a corporate official in Lexington,” said a Paul supporter tried to “take me down” moments after Valle was attacked.

“It was a relatively calm political event until the Rand Paul people simply went nuts when their candidate arrived,” Grossman said. “By and large they appeared to be a very hostile group of people who were looking for trouble, and I guess they got it.”

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