

Forty thousand protest in Boston against Trump and fascist groups

Kate Randall
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A crowd estimated at 40,000 converged on the Boston Common Saturday to protest against racist, anti-Semitic and fascist groups and President Trump's defense of their deadly rampage last weekend in Charlottesville, Virginia.

In Charlottesville, the home of the University of Virginia, neo-Nazis and Ku Klux Klansmen marched through the city carrying torches and shouting epithets such as "Jews will not replace us" and the Nazi slogan "Blood and Soil." They assaulted counter-demonstrators and one neo-Nazi drove his car into a group of antifascists, killing 32-year-old Heather Heyer and wounding 19 other people.

At a press conference on Tuesday, Trump insisted that the fascist mob included "very fine people" and declared that the violence was provoked by the antifascist demonstrators as well as elements among the far-right marchers.

The Boston protest was called in opposition to a rally by the ultra-right Boston Free Speech Coalition that had been scheduled months before the Charlottesville events. Several neo-Nazis had been listed as speakers.

Boston protesters carried signs denouncing the KKK and fascism and depicting President Trump as a Nazi. Marchers also held posters honoring Heather Heyer.

The counter-protests were organized by two groups. The Stand for Solidarity protest, backed by Answer Coalition Boston and numerous pseudo-left and pro-Stalinist organizations, planned a rally outside the State House, on the northeast edge of the Boston Common. Demonstrators organized by Black Lives Matter gathered in Boston's Roxbury neighborhood and marched the two miles to the Common.

These organizations offered no viable perspective for opposing the right-wing policies of the Trump administration and its efforts to whip up the most reactionary and backward elements to throw against the growth of social opposition in the working class. Their efforts to present the political issues entirely from the standpoint of race, and thereby cover over the more fundamental class divide in America, serve to divert social opposition away from a struggle against the capitalist system and channel it behind the Democratic Party.

The anti-Trump demonstrations attracted tens of thousands who came to express their outrage over the events of the last week. "I'm here because of what happened in Charlottesville,"

Laura said. "I'm against fascism and, in particular, the KKK bothers me. That particular branch coming out into the streets again is really disturbing. It needs to be squashed down."

She pointed to the reverse side of her sign, which read: "White silence is compliance." She said, "I just think that people have to stand up and support and protect the people who are being attacked. But in particular, blacks are taking the brunt of police violence... I don't want people thinking that that's what white people believe."

The Boston Police Department (BPD) organized a massive mobilization of city and transit police for the protest. Police Commissioner Bill Evans said there were 500 uniformed police on hand and many plainclothes officers in the crowd. Additional police cameras were mounted throughout the Common for surveillance.

Police ringed the Common and Public Works trucks were stationed to prevent vehicles from driving into the park. Streets surrounding the Common were blocked for vehicle traffic. The BPD threatened to close the protest down if it erupted in violence. In the end, police made 33 arrests, including four on weapons charges and the others for disturbing a public assembly, disorderly conduct, and resisting arrest.

Police separated the Free Speech rally from the counter-protesters with barricades and fences. Only a few dozen fascists showed up for their rally at the Parkman Bandstand. The rally, scheduled to begin at noon, was over by about 12:45 p.m. Police escorted the neo-Nazis out of the Common to jeers of "Go home, Nazi scum!"

Police ushered the "free speech" demonstrators to Boston police vans, to be driven to safety and released. Counter-protesters blocked their exit for about 45 minutes. Police wearing riot gear and carrying sticks finally pushed the counter-protesters out of the way, making room for the far-right protesters to leave. A number of arrests were made.

Derrick was near the area where the fascists were escorted away. "I personally think that in Boston we're a very diverse community overall," he said. "I do believe that racism is real, to be 100 percent honest with you, but I do think there's a bigger agenda to what's going on."

Asked about his thoughts on uniting the working class against Trump, Derrick said, "I feel like what's going on right now is

about class, it's not really about color. It's about the middle class, it's about the lower class, it's about the rich, it's about the elites, it's about the wealthy. It really comes down to that."

The counterdemonstration had largely wound down by about 2 p.m. and people began to make their way to the subway. At 3:22 p.m., Trump tweeted: "Looks like many anti-police agitators in Boston. Police are looking tough and smart! Thank you."

The president then attempted to backtrack on his mischaracterization of the day's events, tweeting later in the afternoon: "I want to applaud the many protesters in Boston who are speaking out against bigotry and hate. Our country will soon come together as one!"

In reality, the major focus of the counter-protest was opposition to Trump's bigoted comments of the previous days in the wake of Charlottesville.

Franny, originally from New Jersey, attends Lesley College in Cambridge, outside of Boston. She explained why she attended the protest. "I'm Jewish, so naturally any gathering of neo-Nazis would offend me," she said. "But I feel like this is one of the very few events where you can voice your opinions and can stand in a safe place.

"You're constantly surrounded with news and media of hate, and all this negativity. So it's really great that people are looking towards equality and a better world."

She was outraged by President Trump's comments following the events in Charlottesville: "His first official statement came from a golf club in New Jersey, not even from a press conference from the White House. And saying that you can't see the difference between anger from white supremacists and anger from those who are angry about the gathering of neo-Nazis. They're completely different types of hate and anger and to equalize them shows immaturity and ignorance."

She disagreed, however, with the WSWS reporter's argument that the working class, as a class, needed to unite politically to fight Trump and the Democrats.

"I feel each economic factor has to go against Trump, even if it's from the 1 percent," she said. "Why don't we attempt to change their positions and their minds? It has to come from every single person, from every single class. Not just working class, not just lower class, not just upper class. This is a social movement."

She agreed, however, that the political establishment was being pushed into crisis. "I think this is absolutely going to break the two-party system," she said. "Because even now you see the splintering off of the Republicans."

This view of bringing the "99 percent" together is reinforced by pseudo-left groups such as Socialist Alternative, which was distributing its literature at the counter-protest. Echoing the sentiments of Bernie Sanders, Socialist Alternative wrote, "We need to build a party of the 99 percent that can take on, not only the fascists, but Trump and the whole billionaire class."

This is a formula for subordinating the working class to

sections of the ruling class and wealthy upper-middle class layers—precisely the social base of the Democratic Party, to which Socialist Alternative orients.

In the same breath, the group encouraged punch-ups with the fascists, declaring, "Socialist Alternative has no moral objections to punching Nazis, or sharing memes about punching Nazis."

This type of adventurism detracts from a struggle to mobilize the one social force capable of putting an end to the attacks on jobs and living standards and the growth of social inequality, as well as endless war, which underlie the turn by the ruling elite to authoritarian forms of rule—the American and international working class. Far from raising the political consciousness of the working class on the basis of a socialist program, it sows political disorientation and plays into the hands of fascist elements and, more importantly, the capitalist state, providing a pretext for more police state measures.

The WSWS spoke to Valerie, a nurse from North Carolina who grew up in Brockton, Massachusetts. "Honestly, I cannot even believe that we're here," she said. "It's so disheartening for me. Growing up in the '60s and '70s, I feel like we have taken a leap back from all our efforts for social equality and social justice.

"The only good thing that has come out of President Trump's heinous behavior is that it has exposed how much racism there is in our country. Also, as we saw today, it shows how much more love and compassion and striving for equality there is. But we can't address things unless they're exposed.

"Capitalism, it doesn't work. I mean, how many decades and hundreds of years do we need to show that it just doesn't?"



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