

On anniversary of fascist killing in Charlottesville

Washington police mobilize to protect handful of neo-Nazis

Patrick Martin
13 August 2018

Only a few dozen neo-Nazis turned out Sunday afternoon for a rally in Lafayette Square park adjacent to the White House, as hundreds of Washington D.C. police were mobilized to protect them from anti-fascist protesters who turned out in far greater numbers.

The rally, called under the title “Unite the Right 2,” was held on the first anniversary of the fascist riot in Charlottesville, Virginia, in which a neo-Nazi drove his car into a crowd of anti-racist counter-demonstrators, killing 32-year-old Heather Heyer.

After days of publicity in the national media, portraying the event as a major demonstration of the strength of the white racist forces to which President Donald Trump openly appeals, the actual turnout was not enough to fill a single subway car when the fascists first assembled at the Metro station in suburban Vienna, Virginia.

There they had to run a gauntlet of anti-fascist protesters, protected by local police, as they took the subway train into downtown Washington D.C. Police were on board each car of the train, and walked the platform at stations along the Orange Line from Vienna to Foggy Bottom, the first stop in the city, where the neo-Nazis disembarked and left the station through a private entrance.

Police told subway riders at the Clarendon station in Arlington that the right-wing group was on the train, and told riders to stay out of the last car, which had apparently been reserved for the neo-Nazis.

Press accounts said that as the neo-Nazis emerged from the Foggy Bottom station and began to walk towards Lafayette Park, they were greeted with shouts of “Go home!” and “You’re not welcome here!”

The fascists arrived more than two hours before the

time for their rally, as specified in the permit, but police made no objection. Instead, they escorted the racists into Lafayette Park and set up metal fences to separate them from counter-protesters, who were chanting, “Nazis go home!” and “Shame! Shame!”

Some of the neo-Nazis carried American flags and some wore Trump’s signature red “Make America Great Again” baseball caps. Rally organizer Jason Kessler, who also headed the first “Unite the Right” rally the previous year in Charlottesville, was reportedly the only speaker at the rally, and for the most part he was drowned out by the shouts and taunts of counter-demonstrators.

Rain then began to fall, and the neo-Nazis left the park before 5:30 p.m., the time when their permit called for the rally to start. They found their route blocked by groups of anti-fascists who ignored the wet weather and continued chanting and taunting them.

Eventually the police and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority extricated the fascists, bringing up a number of white vans which collected the neo-Nazis and took them across the Potomac to the Rosslyn station, where they again boarded the subway to return to Vienna.

All told, several thousand people took part in anti-fascist rallies held in different parts of downtown Washington, and then marched toward the fascist group outside the White House, only to find their way blocked by the police.

Nearly a thousand more people gathered in Charlottesville, 90 miles away, to honor the memory of Heather Heyer and pay tribute to the ideals of tolerance and anti-racism for which she died. Heyer’s mother, Susan Bro, laid a wreath at the spot where her daughter

was murdered, and also took note of the death of two state police troopers whose helicopter crashed while they were monitoring the 2017 protest.

The tiny scale of the fascist mobilization in Washington is in sharp contrast to the official attention paid to protecting the neo-Nazis and the free media publicity given to their racist, anti-Semitic and anti-communist ranting.

Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser activated the city's emergency operations center on Thursday to coordinate the response to the anti-fascist protesters. Five police agencies were involved: the Washington Metropolitan Police, US Park Police, US Secret Service, Federal Protective Service and the US Marshal Service. Police barricades were set up throughout the downtown area to divert counter-demonstrators and prevent them from massing in Lafayette Park within reach of the fascists.

The elaborate police operation to bring the neo-Nazis to the park across the street from the White House, protect them there, then escort them to safety, was in sharp contrast to the police rampage against thousands of anti-Trump demonstrators last year during the inauguration, to say nothing of the military-style violence regularly employed against protests in opposition to police killings.

There was massive media coverage, first in the days before the rally, when the looming confrontation between “hundreds” of neo-Nazis and their anti-fascist opponents was portrayed as a political Armageddon, and then in day-long virtually wall-to-wall coverage on cable television. The *Washington Post* described how, at the Foggy Bottom station, “Kessler emerged from the car, surrounded by a swarm of photographers and TV cameras.”

In perhaps the foulest media response to the planned racist protest, National Public Radio's “Morning Edition” program interviewed Jason Kessler for seven minutes on Friday, asking him polite questions about his views, in the course of which he ranked races by innate intelligence, rating blacks the lowest, with barely a murmur from his interviewer.

President Trump also weighed in on the event, using the occasion, as after Charlottesville a year before, to put an equals sign between neo-Nazi thugs and those protesting against them. After the Charlottesville killing, he said there were “good people” in the ranks

of the neo-Nazis. In a tweet Saturday, he said, “I condemn all types of racism,” as though white supremacists and those who oppose them were equally bigoted.



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