

Fascist group stages midnight march in Philadelphia as police look on

Jacob Crosse
5 July 2021

Roughly 200 fascists with the white supremacist group Patriot Front marched through downtown Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, near City Hall late Saturday evening and into the early morning on July 4. The group's members, dressed in combat boots, khakis, navy blue polo shirts, white masks and carrying American flags and shields, chanted fascist slogans, including repeating former President Donald Trump's lying claim that the 2020 presidential election was stolen.

The fascist group marched in formation for a little over an hour, carrying a banner that read "Reclaim America," the group's slogan. Despite social media footage showing fascists using plastic shields plastered with stickers for the neo-Nazi online forum Stormfront to strike counterprotesters, Philadelphia police reported that no arrests were made or citations issued.

The far-right mob was chased off the streets and out of town by a much smaller multi-racial group of counterprotesters and local residents.

It was only after the fascist mob scurried away into their waiting rented Penske box trucks that police decided to intervene and pull over the vehicles. The cops briefly detained several fascists, including the group's 23-year-old founder, Thomas Rousseau, before releasing them all.

Rousseau, a native of Texas, founded the group in 2017 following the deadly "Unite the Right" fascist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. Several photos taken the day of the 2017 rally show Rousseau near James Alex Fields, who would go on to murder anti-racist activist Heather Heyer. At the time of the rally, Rousseau was a member of the fascist Vanguard America, but left the group in order to start his own organization.

When questioned by reporters following the deadly

2017 rally, Trump infamously aligned himself with the neo-Nazis and white supremacists at the event, declaring that there were "fine people on both sides."

In addition to Rousseau, fascist Nicholas Fuentes, founder of the far-right anti-Semitic group America First, also attended the 2017 "Unite the Right" rally. During the attempted coup on January 6, Fuentes and roughly 50 members of the America First group were seen outside the Capitol waving flags with the group's insignia on it.

Earlier this year, on January 29 in Washington D.C., a few dozen members of the Patriot Front were seen marching on the National Mall towards the Capitol. Similar to the Philadelphia march, the group chanted "Reclaim America."

In the just over three years the Patriot Front has existed, members of the group have been implicated in multiple vandalizing and intimidation campaigns on school campuses and in cities across the US, frequently plastering anti-immigrant and anti-communist stickers on public buildings and private property alike.

Speaking to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Shira Goodman, the regional director the Anti-Defamation League's Philadelphia chapter, said the group has been embarking on an aggressive propaganda campaign in the city, distributing fascist leaflets, vandalizing Blacks Lives Matter and George Floyd murals, in addition to conducting "flash mob" like rallies.

"It's like they're saying 'We're here. We're nearby,'" Goodman told the paper Sunday. "The danger is always there. We know these groups have become more emboldened in recent years, and that things that have been in the shadows of the internet have come off-line."

The fact that small fascist elements within US society have been emboldened is due entirely to the feckless

response of the Democratic Party and President Joe Biden, who continue to preach “unity” with the Republican Party, which continues to back Trump’s baseless lies about the election being stolen and to downplay the attempted coup of January 6.

Fascists have received support not only from the would-be Führer Trump—who has resumed holding political rallies just 6 months after his attempt to overturn the Constitution—but from within the state itself, including the police and the Republican Party as whole. It was revealed last week that leading “Stop the Steal” organizer and friend to the far-right militia movement, Arizona Rep. Paul Gosar, was planning to hold a fundraiser with the fascist Fuentes.

This is not the first time Gosar has lent legitimacy to Fuentes’ organization; in February of this year, Gosar attended the first-ever “America First PAC.” In addition to Gosar, former Iowa Republican Rep. Steve King, who has previously proudly declared himself a “white nationalist,” also spoke at the event.

In June of 2020, in the midst of the global protests against police violence following the murder of George Floyd, local Philadelphia police were seen standing idly by as fascist thugs armed with baseball bats were allowed to stay out past curfew and assault anti-police violence protesters, including John Ehrens, a WHYY producer.

A month later members of the far-right Proud Boys, whom Trump directed during a debate with Biden two months later to “stand back and stand by,” attended an event at the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 5 headquarters in which Vice President Mike Pence gave a speech reiterating his and Trump’s support for the police, telling the assembled crowd of fascists/cops that they “have your back.”

A few months later, on September 26, Proud Boys were seen on video shaking hands with cops after they marched through Philadelphia flashing white power hand gestures while denouncing leftists as “terrorists.”

One of the residents who confronted the fascists Saturday evening was Abdul-Aliy Muhammad. Muhammad told the *Inquirer* that the fascists were tossing smoke bombs and, under the cover of smoke, were assaulting counterprotesters.

“They were prepared. They were hitting people... Trying to get behind you in a group,” Muhammad recalled. Noting the lax treatment the fascists received

at the hands of the Philadelphia police, Muhammad remarked, “It’s obvious, that, when black folks and people who are our accomplices and allies organize in the streets, they are met with a different kind of response from the police.”



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact