

Portland Holds It Down against Fascists and Police

The Clashes of June 30, 2018

CrimethInc.

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On June 30, on a day of nationwide demonstrations against the brutality of ICE (US Immigration and Customs Enforcement) and borders in general, fascists mobilized around the United States to march through downtown Portland protected by a massive phalanx of riot police. The ensuing clashes were reminiscent of the fascist mobilizations of 2017—especially April 15 in Berkeley and June 4 in Portland—but even more egregiously violent. Portland police already wrote the playbook on coordinating with fascists, but this time they opened their lines to let the fascists charge demonstrators, then attacked those the fascists had just attacked. From now on, every movement that attempts to come to grips with the violence of the state—such as the recent wave of protests against ICE—will likely have to deal with the violence of grassroots fascists protected by police as well. Let’s organize to make sure we’re prepared for the trouble ahead.

Here follows a full account from our comrades in Portland.

In Portland, OR, on June 30, Joey Gibson, Patriot Prayer, Proud Boys, Nazis, and the usual assortment of alt-right nationalists showed up to hold a “Freedom & Courage Rally” at Terry Schrunk Plaza at 4 pm. The event description was bizarre. It was almost Pentecostal in tone, speaking of “cleansing the streets of Portland” and finishing with a declaration: “WE WILL MARCH NO EXCEPTIONS.” They advertised that they’d confirmed participants from Washington, Oregon, California, Arizona, Texas, Massachusetts, and Florida, all the while pleading with the Portland Police Bureau for “fairness.” They had been run out of town earlier in June, apparently denied the police protection from anti-fascist demonstrators to which they’d grown accustomed. The irony of an overwhelmingly white ultra-nationalist group whining about “unfair” treatment from the police is hilarious, especially since the Portland Police riot line *always* faces the anti-fascists and police always attack and arrest anti-fascists—they never attack or arrest the fash. Cops and Klan go hand in hand, indeed.

The demonstration started off as usual. In Portland, the fascists rally on federal property (for their own protection, obviously) in the middle of downtown: Terry Schrunk Plaza. Anti-fascists

assemble in the park adjacent to Terry Schrunk—it's called Chapman Square. Since the police were quite aware of the dynamics between the demonstrators, they lined Madison Street, facing the anti-fascists in Chapman Square. As Portland has been on high alert because of the #OccupyICE protests for the past three weeks (and Terry Schrunk is federal), DHS (Department of Homeland Security) officers made an appearance. They arrived wearing the federal government's finest repression gear—caged helmets, masked faces, three-foot batons, pepper ball guns, and so on. A notable difference between this and past demos was that this time, the DHS police were organized into different teams, indicated by a stripe on the back of their helmets. The fascists also had their Halloween costumes on, ranging from a full-blown Pepe/Kek worshiper who looked like a wrestler to 3%ers (remember them helping police with arrests last summer?) wearing what looked like real combat gear. And they call anti-fascists LARPerS?! Even Based Spartan made a re-emergence.

Anti-fascists taunted fascists with megaphones and chants, and the Unpresided Brass Band provided a situationally-appropriate soundtrack, complete with “sad trombone” effects and a sousaphone every time one of the braver fash decided to “come talk” to the anti-fascists. Signs and banners were everywhere, and the bloc was a sprawling front line of roving fighters. The air was electric and numbers were clearly on our side, which always leads to one thing—state repression. One small group of anti-fascists were attacked by the fash, so the police responded by emptying what appeared to be pepper ball guns at the anti-fascists. This set the tone for the subsequent actions of the police.

Twenty minutes later, police announced an official state action and the code under which it fell, and described the potential consequences if anyone chose to violate them. Essentially, they were warning anti-fascist demonstrators what to expect. This is certainly uncommon. It must have taken place because of the presence of major news outlets, and perhaps because the local police were working so openly with DHS. This action they announced was that they were going to set up a police line and clear the street adjacent to the fascist demonstrators.

The fascists formed a self-described phalanx, which took about twenty minutes to assemble, and then immediately began marching towards Chapman Square at full speed. The initial clashes were mitigated by police presence and the speed of the marchers, but there were visible amounts of trash and sticks flying through the air. The fascists turned towards the river, then turned back towards their original direction. It initially looked like they were establishing a serpentine reach, but instead they stopped after several blocks. Anti-fascist demonstrators kept up with them the entire time, but kept a city block between both parallel marches. Anti-fascists grabbed street signs, barricades, construction barriers, and large sheets of wood to create barricades every time the fash attempted a charge. Then, as the fascists stopped and turned several blocks later, both groups began marching towards each other. A small group of anti-fascists broke off and there was a scuffle, followed by the anti-fascist charge.

It's important to note that the fascists charged through police lines with the express intention of attacking anti-fascist demonstrators. *And the police allowed them to.* Remember all that equipment? *Nothing was deployed against the attackers.*

Today was not a typical day in Portland. It was a good indicator of what anti-fascists are up against. The level of physical and psychological intimidation from groups of goons who train together was overwhelming. This phenomenon should be familiar to us from history. During the previous rise of fascism, state power was transferred to what were essentially street gangs (think of the SS). June 30 was an example of that phenomenon recurring—perhaps the most visible I

have personally seen in Portland. The scene was reminiscent of the fascist demonstrations in Berkeley in 2017; but with no police or physical objects to stop the rivers of demonstrators, the initial clash was brutal.

Fireworks and mortars, bear mace, bludgeons, and weighted gloves were among the most visible weapons. The “Berkeley Charge” was repelled by the sheer number of anti-fascist demonstrators and their advantageous positioning but it was clear that the fascists were there to attack them at all costs. The amount of blood spilled by both sides was unsurprising due to the fascists’ consistent state-backed escalation of violence. There were multiple beatdowns from both sides during this initial charge, and both sides peeled back momentarily. The fash let their front line venture too far into the anti-fascist line, and they realized it and turned back. The police immediately used flash-bang grenades. Five minutes later, the clash was declared a riot.

Both groups continued on the same trajectory as before and met up again several blocks later. The skirmishes continued for the next hour throughout downtown. Finally, when the crowds arrived back at the original location (Terry Schunk and Chapman Square), the state was able to repress most of the anti-fascist defense, while allowing the fascists to continue attacking intermittently. Since the demonstration had been declared a riot, state forces effectively cancelled the Patriot Prayer event by forcing both groups to march on the sidewalks. In the final scene, the remaining anti-fascists chanted “BYE BYE NAZIS” as the fascists mounted the singular vehicle they’d arrived in.

Yes, that’s right—the fash brought a big yellow school bus. What version of reality are we in right now? The situation is bizarre, comrades. This is fascism.

It is worth noting the degree of collaboration between the fascists, the police, and the state. All three groups were visibly interfacing, coordinating, and collaborating. The transfer of power and state enforcement has already begun. Everyone should remember that Joey Gibson is a real estate agent and wannabe politician, and assuredly there were other politicians and would-be politicians fighting alongside him today.

Still, today in Portland anti-fascists had the numbers and the spirit on our side. Anti-fascists gave no platform and no space, and even the state couldn’t protect the fash—although they tried as hard as they could to do so.

The police tried to repress anti-fascists from the start. They attacked, they threatened arrest and violence, they allowed the fascists to stream through their lines to attack us. There was no holding back from either side today. And Portland held it down.

Appendix: Another Account from June 30

We include this additional perspective from the streets of Portland for the sake of historical completeness.

I showed up to Terry Schunk Plaza with friends. We were late to the party. Concealing as much of our individual identities as possible had taken time, but for me one of the reasons that I didn’t show up promptly at the beginning of the rally was simply that I didn’t want to be there. I NEVER want to be there. My eyebrows pitch and the blood rises in my face when liberal media casts leftists who come out in opposition to fascists as eager participants in a slugfest, there to earn our edgy anarchist badges. Nothing could be further from the truth for me. If I could never again be in the vicinity of a large mass of entitled, violent, spoiled babies just waiting to hurt

people, I would be thrilled. But I imagine that for most of the people that showed up, like me, staying home as fascism spreads wasn't an option.

Over the course of the next hour and a half, more people continued to pour into the counter-protestor side of the park, Chapman Square. Across the street, behind DHS agents armed to the gills and metal fence barricades, Patriot Prayer and Proud Boys were pumping each other up, giving speeches, and occasionally hurling insults across the street via megaphone. Counter-protesters outnumbered the fascists at least 2-1 by my estimate, with at least half of those in attendance bloc'ed up. There was a strong union presence and several members of the National Lawyers Guild had showed up as well. I paced back and forth, sat, stood, sat again. The bathroom in the park was closed and I had to pee. I was sweating profusely underneath what little protection I had available, but I couldn't drink any more water. At one point, someone got pushed out of the park for a previous sexual assault.

This went on for what seemed like an interminable length of time. Counter-protestors heckled the fascist rally with multiple megaphones, chanting things like, "We remember Charlottesville, you got Heather Heyer killed!" Someone with a megaphone started chanting "Proud Boys drink piss!" and I had to suppress laughter as I heard someone mumble something about kink-shaming. Proud Boy Tiny was handcuffed along with one other person, which lead to much cheering from the counter-protest. I suspect these arrests further infuriated the fash.

Finally, a big yellow school bus rolled up and unloaded about 50 Proud Boys. Shortly after that, I heard someone yell, "They're moving!" Equipped with body armor, helmets, and flag poles, the fash poured out of Terry Schunk Plaza and into the street. Counter-protestors moved adjacent to them, blocking off 3rd avenue. I don't know who threw the first projectile, but that is unimportant. Suddenly, gravel, half-full bottles of water, firecrackers, and other objects were being lobbed back and forth. Though I didn't realize it at the time, police had opened fire, attacking the counter-protesters with rubber bullets. I heard cries go up from multiple directions calling for a medic. Someone was rushed past me with an escort on either side, bleeding profusely from the head. It was a war zone. Finally, I became aware that the police were firing on us as I caught a lung full of pepper spray from the pepper balls they were launching into the crowd.

The PP/PB rally moved down Madison Street, then turned north onto 2nd. The counter-protest kept moving north on 3rd. When both groups got to Main Street, they turned to face each other. I heard someone from the fash side yell, "Let's get em!" and all hell broke loose. There were clashes all around me. As if to illustrate their cowardice, the fascists went after lone counter-protestors out in the front, with as many as seven people on one. I turned around to search the crowd for my friends and almost ran straight into a bearded man with a face full of blood; the image of his breath making bubbles as blood filled his nostrils is still with me. The fascists were literally gang beating people and the police were letting them.

In front of me at roughly 45 degree angles in both directions, lone people were being attacked by groups of three and four Proud Boys. I decided at random and began running toward my left when there was a loud bang between myself and the group I was running toward. Though I knew it was probably a firework, I retreated a few steps before continuing in that direction. The person I was running toward was up and struggling loose from the scum by the time I got there. Amid cries to pull back, explosions from fireworks, and distorted megaphone noise from the police, we retreated back to 3rd.

At Salmon Street, people started taking advantage of the construction barricades that were there to block the road off. People were grabbing trash can lids to use as shields and searching

for anything not tied down to defend themselves with. This scene repeated itself at the next intersection. The Portland police were declaring the scene a riot. As the fascists made their way back to the park where they started, I looked around to realize that we had gotten split up into at least two smaller groups. The counter-protest followed them back to Terry Schunk Plaza. Once it appeared that they were just waiting around for their busses to come pick them up, I decided it was time to leave. Trying to depart with the knowledge that anyone driving past us could have been coming from that rally was one of the most unnerving parts of the whole experience.

This was easily the most violent clash I have ever witnessed. Reflecting on that experience, I have many questions. They got their permit revoked, but ultimately it was the city that shut them down. Of course, the cops defended the white nationalists and other assorted fash, despite their crying to the contrary, but strategically, how could we have prevented the early police assault on the counter-demonstration? How did the group get split up—and how could we have prevented that? How could we have kept each other safer, preventing fascists from singling people out and beating them? Ultimately, my biggest question is how to draw more people out. We had hundreds, but if we had been thousands, as we should have, they might have never even left the park.

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