

The violence at Portland's climate march shows how antifa puts law-abiding citizens at risk | Opinion

Portland, Ore., has gained a reputation in recent years for political violence. Since the election of Donald Trump, far-left activists have continually taken to the streets to rage. Some of them, belonging to a movement called "Antifa," rage by destroying property, attacking citizens (including me) and shutting down the streets. The political monoculture of the city and its government have allowed this to go on for years with little local opposition.

Antifa call themselves "anti-fascist" and say their mandate is to physically confront (i.e. fight) the far-right. In reality, they more often take to the streets to protest a hodgepodge of issues in a cyclic manner: against Trump, for Black Lives Matter, against racism, for open borders, etc. Now, the most recent addition appears to be the climate.

On Friday, thousands of Portlanders—mostly children who ditched class—participated in the "climate strike," a global event led by Swedish teen activist Greta Thunberg. From Melbourne to New York, millions of young people demanded government action on climate change. Despite their apocalyptic language, the protests were colorful, lively and peaceful—except in Portland, where multiple people were arrested for criminal and violent behavior. Why?

Here, a large group of masked militants belonging to the Youth Liberation Front, a "youth" wing of Antifa, commandeered part of the march. Their black uniforms overshadowed the brighter signs carried by the young children. Earlier chants about the climate were now replaced with slurs against police. At one point, a masked protester threw water while another pepper-sprayed a man. Police also arrested Jacob Jepson, a 32-year-old far-left agitator with a large Antifa tattoo on his neck. Jepson resisted arrest and was subdued only after being taken down and pepper-sprayed. A female police officer was injured in the process. Jepson was found carrying a cache of weapons, which included a polymer dagger, spiked brass knuckles, a spring-loaded knife, pepper spray, and other weapons. The hammer he had was wrapped with a plastic bag and tape—tricks used by

criminals to remove one's fingerprints and a victim's DNA.

Even when Antifa militants weren't directly involved in violence, their propaganda network used events at the "climate strike" to spread disinformation about the police. In a viral video on Twitter that has received close to a million views, a user said: "Portland police [were] shoving their way through a group of peaceful young protesters to get to the only black teens in sight." In reality, one of the young people, who happened to be black, had earlier climbed onto a bridge support and was leaning into vehicular traffic, endangering both himself and drivers who had to slam on their brakes. He defied police commands to get down. When they caught up to him later, another youth tried to prevent the arrest. This is what was captured on video and was used to falsely implicate Portland police as racial profilers.

If Antifa activists don't think it's dangerous to shut down traffic, they should be reminded of what happened to one of their "comrades" in 2017 on another bridge in Portland. During a counter-protest against a religious right-wing march, a masked Antifa protester was severely injured by a truck that failed to stop in time when he suddenly dashed across the bridge.

After the "climate strike" march wrapped up in the afternoon, the group of Antifa militants descended on the local Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility, where they hurled projectiles at federal law enforcement. This is the same facility that was shut down by far-left activists last year in a five-week siege. By chance, I witnessed part of the violence. As I was leaving the local hospital for treatment related to the subarachnoid hemorrhage sustained after Antifa militants beat and robbed me in June—of which there have still been no arrests—police gave chase to a large number of masked agitators. The rioters took off in multiple directions toward the hospital after police responded to rocks being thrown in their direction. One of the police vehicles had large cracks all over its windshield.

During the chase, a masked man was taken to the ground and arrested. Most of his comrades abandoned him. A second masked individual was confronted by police who aimed a gun at him and demanded he step away after he attempted to pick up ammunition from the ground. A couple of youths confronted the police. "F— you, pig," shouted a young white male to a black police officer. "DHS, you f—king Gestapo piece of s—. All of you [are] class traitor scumbags." Later in the afternoon, the Youth Liberation Front put out a call on Twitter requesting vegan

food donations for those who were arrested.

Sometimes I'm asked if it's safe to visit Portland. Of course, it is. The violence is isolated and contained to certain pockets of the city for specific events. The rioting—or “civil disturbances,” as law enforcement refers to such occurrences—are routine and predictable. And yet, my experience on Friday outside of the hospital has given me pause on my assessment of Portland's “Antifa problem.”

Ever since my assault at the hands of Antifa militants in June, and receiving ongoing threats of violence ever since I have mostly stayed away from covering protests in Portland. Still, in the course of receiving treatment over the last three months, the events of last Friday demonstrate that Antifa's opposition to the far-right is only a pretense for their violence, which can latch onto any number of excuses and “causes.”

Law-abiding citizens—whether they be drivers, journalists or patients seeking medical treatment—are all at risk.

Source:

<https://www.newsweek.com/violence-portlands-climate-march-shows-how-antifa-puts-law-abiding-citizens-risk-opinion-1461124>

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