

Submitter:

Eric Johnson

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

House Committee On Judiciary

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

HB4138

1/31/26 - The ICE out of Portland rally and march

The rally was held at Elizabeth Caruthers Park and started about 3:00 p.m. The event began very peaceful, and the crowd seemed to be in good spirits. There were about 2000 people at the rally and more gathered for the march (probably 3000 to 4000 people attending the march). The march route intentionally went south from the park on Moody Ave and directly passed the ICE detention facility, which was only a few blocks away from the park where the rally began.

We purposely went to the front of the march so we could take photos and capture some video clips. As the protesters approached the ICE facility, they chanted "ICE out of Portland."

We witnessed about 10 to 12 people (I will refer to them as agitators) wearing gas masks and protective gear motion to the peaceful protestors to follow them to the gate of the ICE facility. The peaceful protestors in the march (probably about 250 to 300 people at the head of the march) did NOT follow them. 2 of the agitators went to the side of the building and started kick a wall that was covered with pieces of plywood. We yelled at them to stop and to "keep it peaceful," but they continued to kick the wall. 1 of the two vandals left to join the other agitators at the gate and the other began pulling at the plywood until he managed to break a small piece loose. The crowd of peaceful protestors booed them and started chanting, "shame, shame, shame).

It didn't take long for DHS agents to come storming out in full riot gear. The agitators fled and the DHS agents began indiscriminately attacking the crowd of peaceful protestors with pepper-balls, chemical irritants and flash-bangs. A flash bang landed and went off near one of my friends. I had a canister of tear gas shot in my direction. It bounced and landed just a few feet away, but it did not go off (must have been a dud). There were children, senior citizens, people with strollers and even people walking their dogs. Many people (and pets) were traumatized by this senseless hostility. These were not domestic terrorists, they were peaceful protestors, but it made no difference to the DHS agents. 10 to 12 people could have been held accountable for trespassing and only 2 people were responsible for any vandalism. DHS agents were not justified in their actions. This was a peaceful protest, NOT a riot. DHS agents were overly aggressive and used unnecessary, excessive force on a peaceful crowd.

As we were walking away from the madness towards our vehicle, we passed a young

woman who is being consoled by her friends. It was obvious by her accent that she was an immigrant and though she was not affected by the teargas, she was in tears and trembling. She was completely traumatized by what she had seen and experienced. The flash bangs are designed to shock the senses. The yelling, screaming, smoke canisters and chemical irritants are a lot for someone to process. It's ugly, chaotic and violet. It is the dark side of humanity and witnessing it was too much for her. I showed her the side of my sign that said, "you're not alone." I told her to take some deep breaths and that she was okay. My sign made her smile so I gave it to her and told her to have courage. I could tell that her spirits were lifted.

For anyone who needs to hear it, you are not alone.

Eric P. Johnson