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Resisting Anti-Solidarity Politics

Pittsburgh Reportback from 04.18

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People came out in force against Michael Knowles in Pittsburgh. A couple hundred people protesting at the O'hara Center in support of trans people forced a substantial police response and disrupted the event before, during, and after. There's going to be a lot written about this so I'll keep my discussion of the action itself short.

Tuesday featured a crowd that wasn't afraid to push the envelope. A mobile crowd forces police reaction and keeps people engaged. Also prevents you from freezing by just standing still. No single leader makes it harder for police to pick out someone to arrest and demoralize the whole protest.

These tactics worked, and with a bigger crowd we could have done even more.

Speaking of a bigger crowd, there were 100+ people who came out on Tuesday who probably would have been happy to join the later protest. But they were explicitly and deliberately told to go home at the end of the Trans Youniting action. Organizers for that action said "Everyone please go home. Do not stay out later" over a megaphone more than once when their action concluded. What the hell is up with that? Do you not want us to have bigger numbers when it comes to actually protest directly against the event taking place?

A couple people who attended the TransYou event were persuaded to come over to O'hara anyways. But deliberately attempting to shrink the number of people potentially available for the later action is decidedly anti-solidarity. No one disrupted the TransYou event or tried to swoop it, nor would we want to. Folks who helped organize the later event didn't try to change the escalation level up or down at Transyou's event either. Some reciprocity would go a long way.

The same could not be said for some of the organizers of the earlier event. They made their way over to the later action. Despite having asked everyone who came to their action home, one of them gleefully filmed the effigy burning. Sure hope no one is on that video who didn't want to be!

We've already seen a letter from someone who they assaulted. One was filmed accusing someone of being "a plant" immediately after a loud and disruptive event. Copjacketing like that is so, so fucked. If you ever think about doing that, fix your heart and walk away. We don't need that in the streets. Additionally, people were asked how much they were being paid to be at the protest, or badgered to remove their mask so they could be identified.

A different organizer from the TransYou event called someone a "terrorist" when asked why she was trying to prevent people in the crowd from moving to join up with the larger segment of people. There were also repeated attempts to get people there to "calm down" and "keep it peaceful", many of which were booed or rejected by those present. These attempts to swoop the protest ultimately failed though because people kept it moving. We moved away from the swoopers and back to the north side of the building. Eventually, the crowd that had stayed with the swoopers came to join us, and swoopers moved back to us, deflated.

All of the conduct above is opposed to the very nature of solidarity. It's both dangerous to people in the street and represses people's autonomy on the ground. No one is required to be at an action. If it's too spicy, take steps to put yourself in a situation where you feel more safe. Plenty of people stayed on sidewalks or lawns, chanted, and generally participated at their comfort level. And we're happy those people are there!! Seriously! But don't try to diminish what other people have going on.

I'll add that one of the people who tried to demobilize the crowd on Tuesday has publicly claimed to have recorded organizing conversations and taken screenshots of organizing chats. That plus their conduct on Tuesday should be enough to draw conclusions about how safe it is to organize with them.

I'm proud of how Pittsburgh resisted the swoopers. Truly, how people responded made me feel hopeful because it feels like we've been getting swooped for like 3 years out here. Again, here are some tactics to resist:

- Start a chant that they're not doing, put the focus off the "leader" and back on the cops or fash, the real reason you're there.
- Get the crowd moving! Crowds have inertia. If you can get a bunch of folks moving away from the swoopers, more people will follow
- Engage directly. This can be personally dangerous, but if you start an argument with a swooper, other people can use the opportunity to do the above two things.

**In love and solidarity,
– a Pittsburgh anarchist**

P.S. – People making claims with their name and face attached that they or anyone they know "organized" the later event (the flier for which came out at the end of March) are fucking lying. The "organizers" (and I shudder to use that word) wanted a space where people and crews could converge and attempt to shut down the event THROUGH A DIVERSITY OF TACTICS. That's it. That was the whole concept.