

Denver: Hundreds march against ICE prison boss

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On Sept. 19, as part of a series of protests against U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), several hundred Coloradans took to the streets of Southwest

Aurora, a Denver suburb, to protest Johnny Choate at his home and call for his resignation.

Choate is the warden of the for-profit GEO Aurora Detention Center, which is currently under contract by ICE. This is one of many private prisons in the United States that are in reality concentration camps for Black and Brown immigrants.

Abolish ICE Denver and Denver Communists, along with a strong coalition of progressive organizations, organized the event in response to repeated reports of rampant abuse and cruelty at the prison. The American Civil Liberties Union recently released [a 36-page report](#) detailing the deaths of multiple inmates and staff ignoring medical requests by those being held.

Abolish ICE Denver was also at a protest in July in which participants seized the U.S. and Colorado state flags at the ICE facility, replacing them with a Mexican flag and an Abolish ICE banner.

Among the victims at GEO Aurora was Kamyar Samimi, an Iranian immigrant and Thornton, Colo., resident for four decades. Samimi had been incarcerated for only two weeks when he died after GEO staff ignored requests for medical attention.

Tragic and violent events like this are disturbingly common at GEO-run prisons. All the while, the company continues to build its profit margin.

ICE = Gestapo

Organizers started the march to Choate's house by announcing they were confronting the daily crimes of the warden and ICE, opposing capitalism and supporting Indigenous sovereignty. Multiple speakers noted the neighborhood was on stolen Arapaho, Cheyenne and Ute land.

Protesters marched through the sidewalks of Aurora holding signs saying, "Quit your

job,” “ICE = Gestapo,” “Unite against police terror” and “Johnny Choate, there’s blood on your hands.” They chanted, “No hate! No KKK! No fascist USA!” and “Immigrant rights are human rights!”

A small group of counter-protesters in a large truck playing Bruce Springsteen’s 1984 anti-Vietnam War song “Born in the USA” at full volume attempted unsuccessfully to harass and intimidate the protestors.

Also attempting to intimidate and incite the peaceful crowd was the Aurora Police Department. As the march approached Choate’s house, police in full riot gear formed a line on either end of the protest and in front of Choate’s home, attempting to entrap the protesters.

The police never stated why they blocked the demonstrators and arrested three on charges of “obstructing justice.” All were later released.

“I don’t see a riot here, why are you in riot gear?” the marchers chanted as police attempted to stop the peaceful march.

Other chants and speeches stressed the solidarity between oppressed peoples and the working class. Protesters also wanted to make clear to employees of the facility that this would continue until they resigned from their jobs.

Following over two hours of marching through the suburban development, protesters met back at a local park for words of encouragement and solidarity from Denver immigrant rights leader Jeanette Vizguerra.

The people of Denver made one thing abundantly clear: ICE’s racist and fascist attacks on the immigrant community will not be tolerated in their community.

ICE out of Denver! ICE out of everywhere! Close the concentration camps and prisons now!

