

Defend Seattle CHAZ - no police-military intervention!

written by Greg Butterfield
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Rally outside the boarded-up East Precinct in Seattle's Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone.

In a month of extraordinary rebellions following the police execution of George Floyd, one of the most significant is the takeover of a six-block area around the Seattle Police Department's East Precinct, where the local community and activists have established a police-free Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone (CHAZ).

"Hundreds of protesters have taken over several blocks of Seattle and transformed it into the Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone ... helping to amplify nationwide protests while offering a real-world example of what a community can look like without police," [the Guardian reported](#).

"Protesters have filled several blocks and at least part of a park in the artsy Capitol Hill neighborhood of Seattle, after police abandoned their east precinct, following dangerous clashes between protesters and law enforcement."

The people's takeover of a small area of Seattle has sent panic through the halls of power, starting with the White House. President Donald Trump has made several [threats to "retake" the city](#) from the community, whom he labels "domestic terrorists." Trump implied he will use military force if Washington State Gov. Jay Inslee and Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan don't move swiftly to crush the CHAZ.

Trump's threats have been echoed by right-wing media slandering Seattle Black activists with racist terms like "warlords" and warning about imaginary "antifa" violence. Fox News was exposed for [using doctored photos](#) in its rabidly hostile coverage of CHAZ.

In light of [Trump's attempted military coup](#) in Washington, D.C., on June 1, when the president ordered the clearing of protesters from Lafayette Square by the National Guard and appeared publicly with Pentagon brass to threaten using the U.S. military

to put down anti-police terror protests, the movement must take these threats seriously and not dismiss them as Trump's usual empty boasts.

Demands of Black collective

A [statement of demands](#) from Black leadership in the CHAZ, "Collective Black Voices at Free Capitol Hill," explains, "This is no simple request to end police brutality. We demand that the City Council and the Mayor, whoever that may be, implement these policy changes for the cultural and historic advancement of the City of Seattle, and to ease the struggles of its people. This document is to represent the Black voices who spoke in victory at the top of 12th & Pine after 9 days of peaceful protest while under constant nightly attack from the Seattle Police Department.

"The Seattle Police Department and attached court system are beyond reform. We do not request reform, we demand abolition. We demand that the Seattle Council and the Mayor defund and abolish the Seattle Police Department and the attached Criminal Justice Apparatus. This means 100% of funding, including existing pensions for Seattle Police. At an equal level of priority we also demand that the city disallow the operations of ICE in the city of Seattle."

The collective's demands are broken into four categories: the justice system, health and human services, economics and education. They call for de-gentrification of the city and rent control; for hospitals and care facilities to employ Black health care workers to serve the community; for Black and Indigneous history to be elevated in the state's education curriculum; and many other urgent needs of the city's workers and oppressed.

Self-organization against the system

Earlier this year, Seattle was the site of one of the first major COVID-19 outbreaks in the U.S., devastating poor and oppressed communities and the health care system.

But the city also has a history of militant struggles, from the [1919 General Strike](#) inspired by the Bolshevik Revolution to the 1999 Battle of Seattle during the meeting of the World Trade Organization.

There are many examples in history of the people setting up their own governing bodies and defenses, free of the police and other capitalist institutions — from Nat Turner’s Rebellion to the Paris Commune to the Russian Revolution and every revolutionary manifestation since. When the people rise, and begin to understand that the whole system is their enemy, they naturally seek to create and defend these forms of self-organization, which have been called communes, soviets, people’s assemblies, etc.

Trump’s threats to unleash the military to “retake” Seattle reflects the fear in the ruling class that this modest expression of people’s power will inspire workers and youth to take similar measures elsewhere, especially coming on the heels of the burning down of the 3rd Police Precinct in Minneapolis.

The rulers are right to worry. An attempt was made to establish an autonomous zone in [Asheville, N.C.](#), though it was subsequently crushed by the police; while the governor of neighboring Tennessee issued a panicky warning against similar efforts in Nashville.

From Atlanta to Minneapolis to Oakland, and all over the world, people are watching, learning and drawing lessons from the Seattle experience as they have from Minneapolis and all the historic events of recent weeks.

The urgent need now is for solidarity to defend the CHAZ from attack, whether by Trump and the Pentagon or the “liberal” authorities in Washington State.

One, two, three, many Seattles!

