

DES MOINES DEFENDER

Community Zine

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Local Mutual Aid

@DesMoinesBLM

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DMPD DEPLOYS SOUND CANNON AGAINST CHILDREN

Acting on orders from Joe Gatto the DMPD unleashed a sound cannon on a group of non-violent demonstrators last month, some of which were children. The LRAD device used to attack is designed to cause permanent hearing loss and disorient US citizens practicing their civil rights.

Many of the juvenile victims had wandered from their homes to witness and support the wildcat demonstration on the south side. They were soon blasted, along with the protesters, with weapons typically reserved for a war zone.

DMPD defended the use of permanently disabling weapons in a residential neighborhood by claiming they serve to protect Barrata's at all costs. When reached for comment, Des Moines council member Josh Mandelbaum said "If the children didn't want to be exposed to hearing damage, they should have got a permit."

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THE SLANDER OF ABDI SHARIF

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Despite the overt use of violence, police were able to manufacture charges against the masterminds behind the demonstration. One was later apprehended at their place of worship, another at a food bank.

After repeated threats of chemical attack the protesters made a tactical retreat away from Gatto's hit squad. Earlier in the day the march stopped by a vacant home in the 4th Ward which Gatto lists as his residence to justify an illegitimate position on the city council.

Later in the afternoon multiple drivers were seen honking their horns while passing Barrata's.

"Focus on the real victims here," DMPD said, "Those innocent restaurant patrons trying to enjoy their meal and having to deal with a noise disturbance. We will hunt down perpetrators and prosecute them to the fullest extent of law. Sometime in November."

Six officers are rumored to have been hospitalized following the deployment of the sound cannon.

When accused child abuser and police spokesman Paul Parizek addressed the Abdi Sharif case in August he painted the picture of a troubled young man, who flirted with criminals and ultimately committed suicide because of personal struggles. As we've learned throughout the summer, media will often take Parizek's statements at face value, offer no contradicting voice or make a minimum effort to fact check his claims.

Paul is good at this. Framing the narrative by highlighting only what they want media to report. KCCI's audience then dutifully follows the easily digestible and familiar format. It's easy to believe that Abdi Sharif committed suicide if you listen to them, but that would be taking their word for it, and with DMPD's track record, this is foolish. One could argue they took the easy way out and slandered Abdi Sharif rather than investigate serious witnesses who came forward in the wake of his disappearance.

Three months after Abdi Sharif went missing a witness walked into the Des Moines police station with information on the missing person case. They stated that a friend of their daughter had admitted involvement in the 'killing of Abdullahi' after being reminded of him on Facebook. The daughter implicated two people by name and said the crime was drug related. The witness stated that she feared for her life. They left and came back a short time later after talking to the daughter.

The witness returned with a different story. The killing they were actually referring to was a 2019 case where a burned body was found near Gray's Lake. At the time of the report two suspects in that murder were already in custody and facing trial. The reporting officer made multiple references to meth addiction and the lead was pursued no further.

One witness wrote to officer Kyle Theis (yes, that Theis) that on the night Abdi went missing she saw a tall, lanky, male, running across Merle Hay narrowly missing traffic that "looked like the missing boy." Shortly after, another man ran across the street in the same direction. It was icy that night and darting across Merle Hay in those conditions demonstrated some measure of desperation.

The witness stated this incident happened at nearly that exact time Abdi passed out of range of Target security cameras and just before he texted his sister: "S/s and I'll show you | I got bad news ...bad bad news"

Abdi later is on video boarding the 16 and heading east on Douglas from a bus stop within walking distance. The witness is sure this incident happened on the night Abdi disappeared because they remember eating at Fazoli's that night and verified it on a bank statement. They called the witness back later and convinced them they had their days confused.

Instead of pursuing leads, DMPD looked to criminalize Abdi's disappearance from the get go. He was immediately profiled for involvement in multiple murders, burglaries and even an extortion scheme. Several totally not racist citizens called detectives to report they had seen Abdi running from the scene of unsolved shootings.

On April 21st a witness emailed DMPD stating that Abdi's known Snapchat account added them as a friend that day. Abdi's family told the detective that three people had access to Abdi's account following his disappearance and none of them had added this witness as a friend. Police stated that family had "changed Abdi's login details" following his disappearance.

The FBI was able to extract search and text data from Abdi's phone despite extensive water damage. When investigators decided to close the case, they did so based on several assumption that are a stretch of truth at best. The notion was presented that Abdi had performed Google searches on how to commit suicide by overdose that night. The only evidence provided to back that idea is a somewhat innocuous search Abdi performed seven days before he disappeared, not en route to the bridge as DMPD presents. Abdi typed: "can you overdose on weed and acid" In another exchange, Abdi texts to a co-worker about going away for a while, even if it's not my fault, would you be mad at me? The co-worker interprets this as a suicide threat, to which Abdi replies: "I was talking about moving."

The DMPD maintained in their statement that Abdi had been secretive about his movements and hanging out with shady characters, when it looks more like he was an 18 year old playing hooky from work and lying to his Mom about it. They maintain his behavior indicated a suicidal ideation.

The family is insistent that he had no desire to hurt himself and had an intense fear of water, a fact Abdi himself wrote about on Facebook. The DMPD will have you believe that a young man, in the prime of his life, depressed about his dead end job at Target and graduation prospects, jumped off a bridge into icy waters and intentionally drowned himself, a feat nearly impossible to accomplish without weights. Your body has a natural instinct to resist drowning, even if you're determined, unless you have a way of anchoring yourself in the water.

On June 10th a medical examiner in Polk County reached out to DMPD for information on Abdi prior to his disappearance, primarily to discuss drug use. Abdi's text message history is full of him discussing small marijuana transactions with his sister. Hours before he disappeared he was asking her to send him \$5, yet DMPD presents this information as proof Abdi was involved in criminal activity and intoxicated enough to fall into the Des Moines River on a freezing night in January.

American forensic pathologist Cyril Wecht agreed to review Abdi Sharif's autopsy for this publication. He agrees with the medical examiners finding that the cause of death was undetermined with possible drowning. Wecht noted that Abdi's body was discovered in the river (face up, limbs sticking upward) in a manner that fits the profile of the Smiley Face Killer, a long rumored serial killer loosely connected to dozens of mysterious drownings across the US since the 1990's.

The PI hired by the Sharif family disputes she made conciliatory statements regarding Abdi's probable suicide to detectives. Stephanie Kinney is portrayed as a conspiracy theorist who came to her senses throughout police files. At times, while Abdi was still missing, the PI connected him through six degrees of separation to the "DG Block", labeled his Uncle a pedophile and asked police to look "into the drug aspect" of Abdi's father. Kinney disputes the police narrative, calling it a bunch of lies and plans on returning to Des Moines to search for further clues.

There was no justice for Abdi Sharif. Not with the family believing the investigation was half-hearted. The DMPD first tried linking him to crime and when they couldn't do that, they stopped looking, failing to pursue any lead requiring leg work. When he was discovered a very short distance from where he disappeared, they immediately went to work constructing a suicide narrative, loosely pieced together via old texts and search history. They wanted you to forget about Abdi Sharif in May, but we never will.



LESSONS IN DIRECT ACTION: CAT EDITION

I get along well with humans. Really, I do. In exchange for warmth and food, I pay them moderate attention and appear cute despite being a cold blooded killer. Rubs are provided along with breakfast nearly every morning. I'm allowed to roam, pounce and shred pretty much whenever. The humans readily clean out my toilet without much reminder. I'm allowed to scratch up the furniture under the implicit understanding that they can replace stuff, but they can't replace me. There's pretty much nothing the human's can do to disturb the small civil society I've carved out for myself here in the Merle Hay neighborhood. Other than cut off access to my bathroom facilities.

Think about it. Your sewage starts backing up, they stop picking up your trash, you humans are starting a petition and writing a strongly worded letter to Connie Boesen amiright?

MANDELBAUM'S NIGHTMARE

They came for me in my dreams from over the hills. Like a rumbling in the distance. Chanting. Getting closer. Peering above the laptop in my study. A mob of them I swear. Faces all melted together. Masked people of all sorts shouting into bullhorns demanding accountability. I tipped toed slowly from my front porch after Katherine had retreated to nap. In my dream I could not control myself. Like I was on a conveyor, being led slowly, closer and closer to the madmen. Then, like in every underwear dream you've had, I was invited to speak, but no matter how loud I spoke, my voice was not amplified. The harder I tried, the louder the crowd jeered. I confronted the mass while naked, stripped of my veneer of progressivism.

They presented a list of demands. Defund the police? Are you kidding me? Who will stand between this castle and the professional anarchists and violent outside agitators now confronting me at the curb and disturbing the neighbors? This is exactly why I approved improved marksmanship training for the city security force!

I did my best to mimic a supporter, but no matter my act they saw through it. I'd even attended one demonstration back in May and tweeted my support! What more do they want from me? I got a picture with John Lewis back in the day for Christ's sake!

They said if I'm the most progressive member of city council it's a bad sign. They waved their banners, chanted over me and as suddenly as they appeared, they were gone. I was invited to join them, but my feet were locked in concrete, right there on my front lawn. Doctor I said I wasn't afraid, but I was. They noticed that I was shaking.

The doctor leaned back and let out a sigh. This wasn't the first time a city council member had visited complaining of reoccurring nightmares this summer. Always the same. Members of some protest community visiting them at home and saying mean things. Sometimes the nightmares seep into work scenarios, where the disruptors call out hypocrisy in eighty second intervals.

Mandelbaum was then posed the same question Gatto, Boesen, Voss and Westergaard were asked when they visited with the same symptoms.

These people that visit you in your dreams Josh. Have you ever considered listening to them?

THE SECOND BATTLE OF I-80

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That's the approach I took at first when the scary man in the basement closed the door on my bathroom. Adapting your bizarre concept of peaceful protest I sat outside my keepers door for twenty minutes howling at the moon to no avail. Just when it felt like my voice was being ignored, it dawned on me that the oppressor had changed the rules mid-game and simply turned up the music to tune out my pleas. The common avenues I explore to express my grievances were no longer working, so I took my protest to another level. I could take the mistreatment for the time being. The guy with door opening ability had to come out of his room at some point. So I waited outside in the hallway, determined to wait as long as it took him to let his guard down.

When he finally exited, I slipped in like always and rolled on my side, expecting attention. Just another normal day. He never saw my direct action coming. Using intel I had collected on where this human slept and understanding high value targets, I sprung up and proceeded to drop the biggest shit of my life, right in the middle of his bed.

That was sure get his attention and fix my sanitation situation and it did, almost within seconds of his outburst, the human collected his sheets, walked towards the washer

6:38 - We're inbound to Iowa City from Des Moines. A group of masked anti-fascists picked me up from the side of the road after we connected through a loose group of signal messages. We're complete strangers, except we've seen each other on the streets all summer. Real recognize real.

7:22 - The idea tonight is to show our solidarity with the IFR after consecutive nights of protesting. We're partners in the same fight. Some members of our Des Moines crew have direct connections to Iowa City from the University and previously living in the community. Most of the protesters we meet in front of the Pentacrest are relaxing in the grass. Leadership forms a little information circle just before we get started. A live streaming chud is continuously blocked from filming by an umbrella crew.

7:31 - The police here have barricaded themselves in a pig pen surrounding the Old Capitol, I assume in anticipation of graffiti attack. There's a good dozen of them standing around staring at us. These are the people routinely praised by city council for doing a valuable job and keeping us safe. They all have a look on their face that says they'd love nothing more than to jump over the barrier and beat the shit out of everyone.

8:12 - We occupied space, blocked traffic (guilty) and did our best to annoy gawkers while encouraging them to join. Several young men grabbed a mask and ran out of student housing to applause. "Out of your house into the streets" in real time. The march is picking up steam as we go.

8:29 - The IFR includes a strategic exterior decorating team that we just can't match in Des Moines. A call will go out, umbrellas will pop and when the mass moves on, a beautiful piece of street art is left behind on public property. I have no idea how it works other than that. Without fail, these artists are confronted by police snitches with cameras who always make some reference to "just doing my job" or whatever. They're persistent bastards.

9:03 - Our momentum is briefly halted when we encounter occupiers defending the palace of some IC oligarch. One of them bizarrely hides behind a column as dozens of flashlights expose his position. They're deemed no threat and we safely move past, bending our way towards Dubuque St.

9:27 - Several months ago I watched on live stream as demonstrators in Iowa City were shot at with tear gas as they occupied the very turf I'm standing on now. Just as I'm feeling symbolic, the announcement is made that we're taking the highway. Time for part two. I'm moderately prepared with helmet, goggles, respirator and an umbrella.

9:32 - I take a position on the front lines next to people 20 years younger than me. Taking a hard swallow I begin marching forward with

and discovered my plight. My sanitation facilities had been cut off and now he couldn't ignore it. So learn from me humans.

Direct action works when peaceful protest doesn't. Take a shit on your oppressors bed.

Sometimes it's the only way to get their attention.



the line. Behind the umbrella wall we're largely blind to what's in front of us. Every minute or so, I'll sneak a peak to see how close we're getting to the police line. Every time I think we're close, we push closer.

9:46 - Two authoritative looking guys meet us about 30 yards out. They blather something about the highway, but their appeal is disregarded and shouted down because the troops approached without masks. Several attempts to physically hand them masks are ignored and the conversation goes no further.

9:53 - Alright it's nut check time. We're advancing to within feet of the police line. I'm slightly scared right up to the point I see cop boots under the lip of my umbrella, then I'm full blown scared. There's no courage without fear they say. We're definitely pushing the envelope and I'm half expecting pepper spray and a beat down.

10:10 - Going better than expected. The police are standing silently with their arms crossed as protesters shine lights and let off some verbal steam. Overall it's a healthy exercise. There's a lot of pacing back and forth by a small crew of leadership, each and every cop is getting a taste of their own medicine.

10:21 - I feel the slightest tinge of sympathy when an older patrolman starts squirming under bright flashlights, then I think of the thousands of families he's destroyed by locking people in cages and shake it off.

10:34 - Legitimately surprised the police aren't retaliating and let us march this close. They either; didn't expect us to approach and weren't prepared or were told to stand down because of political pressure exerted by the IFR since the First Battle of I-80. Tear gas is not being used tonight to defend a strip of paved concrete. Either way, the protesters in Iowa City have serious courage and don't give a fuck. We're thoroughly embarrassing them and a lot of smart young people are getting things off their chest.

10:42 - This approach on the police line tonight revealed a serious flaw in my gear. The combo of respirator and goggles as separate pieces causes a lot of fogging in this humidity. I'm practically blind out here, but no way those fuckers are getting pepper spray directly in my eyes again.

11:05 - We're making a tactical retreat with the whole crew intact firmly believing we handed Iowa State Patrol a L tonight. Only one comrade that I can see is being detained. Something involving touching a patrol car.

11:13 - Heading back downtown loudly occupying all lanes of traffic. Music is bumping from the convoy. The mood is jubilant. We block off an intersection strictly for a dance off.

11:39 - The protest concludes with a gathering at the Pentacrest where the cops are still waiting. Everything is calm as we disperse in groups. We're thinning out crossing Linn and walking east on Iowa Ave. The mood is still light as our pack compares notes on the action. There's a scream behind us. Someone yells "they're coming!"

11:47 - Utter chaos as ICPD bull rushed out of no where. When I turned around all I saw was the gold dome and a line of police charging at us like maniacs. "Which one is he?" "The one in the black!" People went scrambling in every direction. Lots of screaming. Confused looking cops lunging at anyone not running fast enough. Some of them ran out of gas after 50 feet and slowed down to intimidate us. They were targeting a visible organizer of Des Moines BLM with black bag counter-insurgency tactics imported from overseas. One heavy set, balding cop pointed at me and said "You all are going to learn not to point lasers at us."

11:51 - Sirens blaring everywhere. One squad car slammed it in reverse with a group of protesters banging on the hood. Bottles are thrown. The last cop drives away from the scene with a huge shit eating grin on his face. One in custody.

12:17 - It takes a minute to get over the suddenness of their attack. I regroup with a few student protesters to head to the Kum & Go on E. Burlington for a drink. This gas station remains identical to how I left it in 2006. Long lines, obnoxious conversation, feels like I'm back home.

12:47 - We're obviously curious about bail for our incarcerated comrade so calls go out. The local mutual aid bail fund isn't answering the Google voice number they have advertised. Des Moines is aware of the political prisoner in Johnson County, but can't get any information. Neither can we nor can the Press Citizen reporter calling the jail.

1:01 - Maybe going to the jail for information wasn't a great idea. Two pigs stand guard outside the side entrance while a SUV circles the block, creeping by us each time with an active video camera. We decide to regroup at Gumby's for late night pizza and blunts.

2:15 - Record of the charges are finally posted online. Nine counts of assault on a peace officer by laser pointer. Not shitting you. \$45,000 bond, which we can't do anything about. Still a lot of unanswered phone calls. People looking for information from home.

4:05 - Spending the night in the backseat of a car in Iowa City waiting for someone to bail out of jail. It's been a long fucking time.

8:36 - Somewhere in there I dozed off. Bail fund is still working on it and court is in a few minutes.

9:45 - Our political prisoner has been freed without bond. Judge called the charges inconsistent. Maybe we had declared victory too soon Monday night. We depart feeling like ICDP & UIPD evened the score by snatching a key member of leadership. Main stream media is already running with the arrest as the main story line emerging from the demonstration. The fourth estate once again controls the narrative.



THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF DES MOINES BLM

Summer 2020

- The restoration of voting rights for over 60,000 previously disenfranchised Iowans.
- Ban on police choke holds.
- Iowa Attorney General now able to investigate deaths caused by police.
- Prevented officers previously fired for misconduct from being re-hired in Iowa.
- Added requirement for annual law enforcement deescalation training.
- Ended the unconstitutional city curfew the day after demonstrating at Mayor Cownie's home.
- Successfully shut down Park Ave. Hy-Vee in response to racially discriminatory workplace conditions.
- Creation of the community gardening project at Edna Griffin Park.
- Organized relief effort and delivered supplies in response to Cedar Rapids derecho.
- Creation of the community bond fund for wrongly arrested protesters and journalists.
- Rent relief fund organized in defense of those facing eviction during the COVID pandemic.
- Continued support of homeless camps.
- Successful shutdown and delay of city council vote on ammunition purchase for DMPD target practice.
- The longest public debate in the history of Des Moines City Council.

CURRENT DEMANDS

- Defund DMPD
- Eviction moratorium now
- Decriminalize marijuana
- Create a civilian review board which investigates the actions of DMPD officers

