

DSA member in Spokane, Washington detained by unidentified officers before police violence protest

By Kayla Costa
7 September 2020

Last Sunday, August 30, the 40-year-old cochair of the Spokane, Washington chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), Jeremy Logan, was arrested by unidentified local officers dressed in plainclothes shortly before attending a protest against police brutality. He was detained in a local jail for over 24 hours as federal agents attempted to interrogate him.

The incident is a chilling development in the antidemocratic crackdown on protests against police brutality across the United States in which local police carried out snatch-and-grab operations previously in New York City, Pittsburgh, and Portland. In the latter city, these kidnapping-style arrests were carried out directly by unmarked federal agents deployed by the Trump administration.

Logan described the events he endured through social media posts and interviews, which were verified by two witnesses who were present at the time. Around 2:00 p.m., he arrived at the site of a local rally. He noticed a man dressed all in black approaching him, then “looked across the street as two men, also in plainclothes, were running directly at me,” one of them with a green vest and a gun. One of the men told him he “was under arrest for a warrant in Okanogan [County].”

Soon after being grabbed by these men, a “beatup, old minivan” arrived with up to five more officers in street clothes, who then placed handcuffs on Logan and put him in the back of the van, driving him a few blocks away so that a city cop car could pick him up to transport him to the downtown jail. None of the men had badges or identified themselves with a department. Logan reported that he “repeatedly asked them to identify themselves and was told not to worry about it.”

After Logan hounded the officers to state the cause

for his arrest, the city police contradicted the snatch squad’s earlier statement and said they had a warrant from Chelan County. Based on Logan’s admittance that he does have a warrant for unpaid fines in Douglas County and has not even traveled to Chelan or Okanogan for years, there is no evidence of a valid cause for arrest.

According to official communications received by HuffPost after Logan was released, the Spokane County Sheriff’s Office carried out the arrest, citing a “valid felony warrant” and alleging that Logan “has made threatening public statements toward law enforcement in the past.” The Spokane Police Department took responsibility for his transportation in the marked city police vehicle to the jail.

Logan pointed out that police could have arrested him at any point in the years in which his warrant had been active, but they chose to do so at the site of a protest. It is clear that the warrant was utilized as a pretext for his arrest on the basis of his political involvement with tenant organizing, the DSA, and antipolice violence protests since a close friend was murdered by police in 2017.

The political motivations behind the unconstitutional proceedings were made clear by the fact that local police repeatedly tried to get Logan to speak to federal officers, presumably about his political activity, other protesters, and similar topics while he was detained.

“They were going to try to convince me that something bad is going to happen to me if I don’t cooperate with them,” he told the HuffPost. “And even though I’m scared, even though I’m tired. ... I know that there’s nothing that they can do to me. I know that they have nothing on me.” Thus, Logan refused to

speak to the two federal agents.

“I would like people to recognize how scary this is,” Logan told the *World Socialist Web Site*, “that I can be targeted because of my political beliefs. They [the police] are hiding behind a warrant for not paying probation fines on an arrest that happened nine years ago in December. Since when do pigs [police] chase down and throw someone in a van to arrest them for a warrant?”

While he has not been in a position to comment on the specific details of what happened to him inside the jail, he explained that in general, officers and agents “will prevent you from using the phone, or communicating with people as much as they can.”

“They will lie to you and try to make it seem like your life is over, and it might feel like it.” He continued, “They will tell you your comrades are ratting you out or try to make you question their integrity. They want to ruin your life because you are their enemy, and they do not see you as a human being.”

Logan told the WSWS that black SUVs were parked outside his apartment building all day on Friday, when the widely read HuffPost article was published.

Spokane County Sheriff Ozzie Knezovich ranted against the article in a statement, claiming that Logan’s account of events was entirely false, saying that the publication “seemed to have forgotten we are a country of laws. They’ve also forgotten their duty to our country to provide unbiased, factual reporting per the protections provided by the Constitution of the United States.”

The Spokane DSA issued a brief statement in response to the events, calling upon the Spokane city government to launch an investigation into the arrest and detainment.

The actions by local and federal agents against Logan violate all basic democratic or legal norms for due process. This is only the latest in a nationwide campaign spearheaded by the Trump administration to brutally suppress all forms of social opposition—universally labeled as “domestic terrorism,” “Antifa,” and “radical left extremism”—through authoritarian and police state methods.

During the protests against police violence and racism this summer sparked by the murder of George

Floyd at the end of May, the world watched in horror as federal agents kidnapped protesters into unmarked vehicles in Portland. Now, local police have been emboldened to perform similar actions, given the green light by the White House and possibly with direct collaboration behind the scenes.

As indicated by the HuffPost comments, Sheriff Knezovich is a fascistic figure with a disdain for left-wing protesters and the media. During the June protests, Knezovich, without a shred of evidence, blamed property damage on “Antifa” activists who came into Spokane from out of town, while he defended far-right Proud Boys protesters for legally carrying weapons, stating, “They weren’t the ones causing damage.”

The illegal kidnapping and detainment of protesters, whether by federal or local police, serves as a warning to the entire working class of the methods that will be employed in an effort to intimidate all those who express opposition to the endless reign of police terror or, for that matter, to the homicidal campaign to reopen schools and workplaces during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Trump is pursuing this strategy from a place of fear ahead of the November elections, knowing well that he lacks the support of the majority of the American population and that the pentup anger in the working class could explode into a much broader political struggle against the capitalist system.

To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>