



DC Peace Team

Cultivating a Culture of
Nonviolent Peacemaking and Resistance

www.dcpeaceteam.com

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DC PEACE TEAM DEPLOYS UNARMED PROTECTION UNIT DURING UNITE THE RIGHT RALLY

In collaboration with the local community, we deployed 24 trained persons as an unarmed civilian protection (UCP) unit this Sunday August 12th during the Unite the Right rally in Washington DC. Our UCP unit deployed to accompany and protect people, particularly those who are most in danger. For example, we were requested to assist with the resistance movement at Freedom Plaza from 11am-3pm and then to accompany them on their march to Lafayette Square. During our time at Freedom Plaza, our unit was broken into four affinity groups which worked the outer perimeter and engaged in many conversations as we handed out de-escalation tip sheets. Some wanted to know who we are, how they could join the DC Peace Team, to simply offer a thank you for our presence, and to express that they felt safer with us around. Our conversations were also about building trust with people from the various groups at the rally, such as Antifa. This enabled us to be more effective later in the day when hostility built up and arguments ensued even within partner groups. We were able to defuse a pair of persons close to getting into a fight about the tactic of throwing objects.

We also spent the afternoon in Lafayette Square and the surrounding streets, particularly on the west side toward Foggy Bottom. We continued our conversations with people in the northern part of the square. We sent two affinity groups west to monitor possible clash points and to engage what we could. We monitored the arrival of the unite the right group although they ended up being quite small (15-20 people) and they were escorted by police. We de-escalated some actors involved in the blocking of an intersection near the White House which led to a stand-off between the police, Antifa, BLM and others. We sought to persuade the police not to harm the protestors. Many objects were thrown and fire-crackers were shot up in the air. But it did not escalate from there. We were also present at a later stand-off between police and BLM which ended after some chanting and attempts by BLM to persuade the police to open the street.

As some of us arrived back in Lafayette Square, we found ourselves in the midst of an unexpected incident. Two people who entered a space of an adversarial group had been engaged in multiple conversations. At some point, the larger group asked them to leave and the two persons asked the marshals, (who were not DCPT) nearby to help them. As they did this, a more

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hostile crowd gathered. Some of our DCPT members who were in the vicinity recognized the danger for escalation and many people getting hurt or arrested beyond these two persons. In turn, for the protection of everyone in the scene, some of our members worked to create a safer space between these two people and the group as they walked out of the square. Some of our members engaged with some of the more hostile actors as spray paint was used, de-humanizing language, as well as water bottles being thrown, which hit one of the persons leaving the area and one of our DCPT member's in the head. As we engaged with some of the hostile actors, we worked to acknowledge their anger as a way to connect and de-escalate. Some of us said to these actors they were our brothers or sisters, that we loved them, and that we were there to protect them not interfere with their frustrations. Others spoke about how we don't want to just replicate the violence we detest in others, and how they don't need to hurt people to get the change they are looking for. We needed to do similar de-escalation work as the police became part of the scene, since for some, the police presence escalated the energy. Eventually, the police drove the two persons out of the area. No one else got hurt or arrested in this incident.

Overall, by recognizing the dignity of every person, we worked to interrupt de-humanization, prevent violence, and when possible engaged in constructive dialogue. Even when we might disagree with some political positions or strategies used by some people, we still recognized their dignity. Yet, we also recognized that there is constructive conflict, such as expressions of resistance to injustice, racism, and white supremacy.