

CHICAGO AGAINST ICE: “LA MIGRA, LA POLICÍA, LA MISMA PORQUERÍA”

LOS ANGELES PROVIDED A PATH FORWARD FOR PEOPLE WAITING FOR THE RIGHT MOMENT TO FIGHT. MAXIMIZING THE POTENTIAL OF THIS MOMENT AND HELPING TO STEER ITS UNFOLDING INTO A MORE GENERALIZED REVOLT AGAINST CAPITALIST SOCIETY IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL WHO SEEK LIBERATION.



REPORT-BACK FROM
THE DEMONSTRATIONS
OF JUNE 10

Trump's November 2024 victory and the first days of his second administration saw little of the carnivalesque street protests that accompanied his rise to power in 2016. Some comrades said this was evidence that most people were demoralized, demobilized, and resigned to adjust their lives to living under a new regime rather than fighting back. We had a different hypothesis: we believed that hundreds of thousands of people, and maybe more, were biding their time, waiting for the chance to take their shot. With hardly any extra-parliamentary fascists to fight in the streets, and little sense milling around outside various Trump Towers brandishing clever signage, what was the issue, where were the targets, and what was the best opportunity to hit back at Trump and the program he represents in a meaningful and effective way?

Marches on Tesla dealerships—and the more promising destruction of Tesla cars and infrastructure—provided one such path, though this remained firmly within the bounds of a consumer boycott, if a fiery one. Indivisible and 50501 protests recalled the bad old days of 2017's endless open-air group therapy sessions and, for the most part, repeated the messages of that time point for point: *We demand a more competent steward of capitalism's blood-soaked drive toward planetary suicide.*

Then came the scenes in Los Angeles: bold and decisive collective action to interrupt Trump's bumbling efforts at the "largest deportation in American history." The action was not symbolic, but direct and effective. The risks were not taken to speak truth to fascism, but to practically impede its unfolding plans. And the enemy was not just Trump or his Stormfront-addled federal goons, but the local cops, blue city elites, and the entire social order that makes the global South a place people seek to flee while rendering sub-minimum wage migrant labor both economically necessary and cruelly disposable.

As we watched the uprising in LA unfold, federal employees were meeting to coordinate resources and personnel and help put it down. They were worried about a "Portland-type incident"—federal overreach that provoked months of bitter street fighting in 2020 and eventually

left the government humiliated. Across the country, these anxieties have been fulfilled. The Trump administration's suppression of the LA rebels has repeated the heavy-handed overcommitment that turned Portland's protests into a months-long uprising, with the National Guard deployed and Marines trained in crowd suppression techniques on standby. And in the cities where homegrown police response tends away from outright brutality, the administration is doing its best to make up for lost time. In response to the previous days' unrest, the Trump administration announced on the night of the tenth that they intend to deploy Strategic Response Teams—the militarized ICE units whose mass raids turned the anti-ICE demonstrations in Paramount, California into a citywide uprising—in New York, Philadelphia, Northern Virginia, Seattle and Chicago.

Los Angeles provided a path forward for people waiting for the right moment to fight. Maximizing the potential of this moment and helping to steer its unfolding into a more generalized revolt against capitalist society is the responsibility of all who seek liberation. This requires a willingness to experiment, take risks, and reflect honestly on what is working and what isn't. What follows is one such attempt, based on our experiences in Chicago. In the wake of the battle of Los Angeles, we say: *It has to start somewhere, it has to start sometime. What better place than here, what better time than now?*

“Fuck ICE!”

On June 10, Chicago took its best shot at matching the momentum begun in Los Angeles. The previous day, a dozen people were abducted during their court appearances on the fourteenth floor of a building in Chicago's downtown Loop neighborhood. Anonymous activists called a series of demonstrations at the site's parking exits for June 10, hoping to intercept ICE vans before they made their way to a processing center elsewhere in the same neighborhood or out of the state to federal detention centers. Protesters arrived at 55 East Monroe Street at 9 am and aggressively questioned every van that left the parking lot. Worried that the crowd would only grow during the 3 pm demonstration and that clashes over deportation vans would provide a flashpoint for serious unrest, the city's immigration courts decided to close for the day, at both 55 East Monroe and the other location in the Loop, a federal building at 101 Ida B. Wells Drive, which also houses the ICE field office.

We can't substitute ourselves for that missing proletarian component, but we can help set the conditions for its emergence. Tactically, this looks like spreading skills and knowledge about street tactics—spreading illustrations of street formations, tips for barricade-building, and ways to break through bike and riot lines; holding trainings when possible; and encouraging trainees to train their own friends. Some technical problems protesters encounter will require new technical solutions—for example, the paddy wagon's internal barrier. Instead of an excessive focus on gear and equipment, which specializes them as a specific detachment of protesters, would-be frontliners should draw up and share specific information about how certain pieces of equipment or crowd techniques can be used to solve pressing issues raised by tactics that have already emerged in the streets.

Spreading specific information about ICE operations in our communities can help move the dial away from the prevailing aimlessness. This could take the form of posting flyers in neighborhoods near deportation infrastructure, publicly broadcasting when and where ICE agents get to work, or clarifying the rough schedule of kidnappings, transfers, processing, transit to detention centers, and transit from detention centers to nearby airports. If possible, sites at critical points on these pathways should be chosen for confrontations that could open up semi-permanent sites of conflict, the way that the federal building in Portland became an epicenter of struggle in 2020.

Tactical sensibilities and political commitments that are not suited to unsafe yet absolutely necessary struggle against the state and its police will not be able to describe, much less explain, the emerging conflict in a way that the participants can understand. We have to find ways to popularize tactics with radical implications while highlighting their political content in a way that can be legible to everyday participants in the struggle. The present moment demands an intelligent, tactically sharp, strategically clear street force capable of blocking the deportation machine in conjunction with the uprising in Los Angeles, so that the sparks can spread to dozens of other cities and towns.

They want to bring in the National Guard, escalate their response, and force people to stay home. We have to be ready to meet them with the same determination.

autonomous march had cut short, but again, hundreds of people decided otherwise and the thousands behind them followed their lead, passing by the park and taking both sides of Lake Shore drive. On the way to the highway, protesters tagged CTA buses stuck in the crowd: “*FUCK ICE.*” “*FUCK CPD.*”

Portland is Everywhere

The main organized contingents led the majority of the day’s participants back to Daley Plaza, where they held a “dance party” meant to stall the marches and send people home. For the most part, that worked, and numbers dwindled. But a few hundred people decided to start marching again, aiming for the immigration court at 55 East Monroe. The composition of this leg of the march was different from the high point of the day: as the sun went down, the immigration court-bound breakaway was mostly made up of young Latino people, backed by frontliners and people in black bloc regalia. As it traveled through the heart of the Loop, this breakaway made good on the hesitant militancy of the day’s first march. In response to one of CPD’s few successful arrests, people surrounded a paddy wagon, tearing open its back doors to liberate their kidnapped friend, only to be stopped by an additional metal barrier. Projectiles came out, and confrontations with the police became more and more forceful, eclipsing anything we have seen in Chicago since the 2020 uprising. Throughout the night, buses, cop cars, paddy wagons, and Teslas were smashed and tagged.

This is an impulse that’s waiting for a chance to express itself. Los Angeles tipped over from protest into uprising by breaking with the usual terms that dictate these American anti-regime struggles—single-issue anti-Trump malaise, aimless anti-fascism, or even specifically anti-ICE agitation that doesn’t generalize into antipathy toward all cops and the social order they uphold. The class and racial geography of Los Angeles, along with its infamously brutal police and sheriff’s departments, lent themselves to the protests’ expansion into an anti-police revolt. The most promising moments on June 10 tended toward a similar path in Chicago. Their success will be determined in the weeks to come by whether Chicago’s specialized activist scene can make contact with the thousands of people ready to liberate their friends from police and ICE custody by whatever means they deem necessary.

The 3 pm demonstration went ahead as planned. Initially, turnout was small and fairly obedient, and we weren’t sure anything was going to happen. A representative from the building came out and demanded that we stand off of the building’s “private property,” gesturing to a faint line separating one shade of concrete from another. The crowd complied. But being forced off of most of the sidewalk created an opening as the demonstration grew. By 3:30, the crowd had taken the street, and some participants floated marching to the other ICE hub in the Loop, the field office on Ida B. Wells, which was still in operation even though its court was closed. The rest of the crowd followed them.

As the march approached the field office, a bike line came into view, backed by a row of CPD cars and a couple strands of yellow caution tape. With the numbers we had, it was possible that under different conditions, with a tighter-knit and better-skilled crowd, we could have forced the police back. But the march was too slow, too spread out, and not coordinated enough to do so; one participant yelled “be water” and suggested turning around, and the rest of the crowd complied.

At this point, directed more by responses to police harassment than clear strategic priorities, the demonstration turned into a march to nowhere. We walked for three hours, led in a maze by CPD bike lines—repeatedly passing by the Metropolitan Corrections Center, while the crowd chanted “free them all” and people on the inside tapped on the glass, and Federal Plaza, where a demonstration called by the Party for Socialism and Liberation was slated to occur at 5:30, at a comfortable distance from any local ICE infrastructure. A few protesters at the front tried to rush forward through bike lines as they formed, but the rest of the crowd wasn’t prepared to move with them.

Protesters disagreed about which tactics were acceptable. Some people dragged trash cans into the street; others, seemingly not understanding the value of road obstructions for staving off a direct charge from police and hostile (and potentially murderous) motorists, stopped to put them back in their correct place and pick up whatever trash had spilled. Some people wanted to square off with the police at the routine bike lines that directed marchers down certain streets and away from police and ICE infrastructure; others felt obliged to protect the police from the protesters. It wasn’t clear, at this point in the day, which side would predominate, or on which lines the difference broke. But despite the best efforts of peace police and professional activists, every time the

Chicago Police Department attempted to snatch someone off the side of the march, a hundred people sprang into action, throwing CPD against the wall and physically tearing arrestees away from them.

As the hours dragged on, the march's numbers dwindled to just over a hundred. During long stretches, we marched in silence. CPD, intending to capitalize on this demoralization, funneled the march closer and closer to the PSL demonstration on the plaza, eventually confining the protesters that were willing to take the street to the bike line and forcing the other hundred to march through the PSL rally. Like before, this attempt to push the march off its prior footing encouraged it to develop rather than dispersing it.

“PSL hop in!”

The autonomous march's final pass by Federal Plaza happened at 5:50, twenty minutes into the PSL rally and well before their regular programming would have intended to start moving. But twenty minutes of speeches seemed to have worn on the crowd. The march, contained to the bike lane and pushed up onto the plaza, chanted “Whose streets? Our streets!” and “PSL hop in!”—and as the handful of stragglers pushed through the crowd, hundreds of attendees joined in. Dozens of young people, many in keffiyehs, pushed through into the bike lane and surged north through a police bike line that was attempting, too slow, to turn the march west in another huge circle. The standing demonstrators found themselves moving with the crowd. The Party for Socialism and Liberation followed anxiously behind.

By 6:00, working people across Chicago were passing through the Loop, while office employees and service workers along the impromptu march route who had just clocked out found themselves down the street from a steadily growing march. As we headed northeast towards Trump Tower, lodged at the front segment of the march, we figured our demonstration had grown by a few hundred. But as we passed by a building-mounted news broadcast, we realized that we had underestimated our own success: a helicopter's live footage showed that the street was full, for a dozen blocks, of thousands of people. We'd found ourselves at the front of an unplanned, unpermitted march, thousands strong and still growing.

“Fuck 12!”

Eventually, the march made its way to Michigan Avenue. Some marchers, remembering the layout of the city's downtown ICE infrastructure, reminded those at the head of the march about the immigration court at 55 East Monroe, and started an “ICE is that way!” chant, gesturing to the turn as it approached. Hundreds peeled off of the front of the march, but the court's parking entrance was barricaded, and the front of the march wasn't ready to break into it, so the breakaway cut further into the Loop.

As we marched under the elevated rail tracks, CPD began to set bike lines up, intending to force us back towards Millennium Park. On the way to the first bike line, the composition of the front of the crowd changed sharply: frontliners equipped with gear that'd been collecting dust since 2020 pushed up to the front, joining less equipped people fresh off work to break the first police bike line with force, scattering CPD and prompting cheers from the rest of the crowd. Two subsequent bike lines broke voluntarily when confronted by the breakaway.

The endless snake marches that followed—diverging and recombining, and soldiering ever forward in search of a mission—call to mind the post-Ferguson moment in 2014, before the original Black Lives Matter movement was decisively enclosed by the non-profit industrial complex. Except this time, marchers were outfitted with the acumen and tactical gear of a decade of street battles around the world. Tactics like the de-arrest were common sense to many who have lived through recent struggles, some of whom cannot understand why any self-proclaimed radical would stand around watching their comrades taken to jail. Alternatively, there was a pronounced gap between the equipment of the marchers—some of whom came in full bloc and frontliner gear, equipped with items like leaf blowers, which are useful to redirect tear gas which CPD hasn't used in sixty years—and the content of the march itself, which was mostly an exercise in collective jaywalking. These would-be frontliners were in search of an opening that has yet to be created. The most ambitious edges of the rest of the day's protests would experiment with breaking it open.

After the third bike line retreated, we were folded into what we initially assumed was the larger PSL march—but which was actually another breakaway that had been forced away from the field office at Ida B. Wells. Organizers with the PSL and FRSO contingent tried to lead the crowd into a large park, presumably to finish the battery of speeches that our