

Multiple arrests in one week:

Serious Escalation in Repression against Revolution Club by Chicago Authorities

In a serious escalation of repression, authorities in Chicago are arresting revolutionaries on bogus charges. In one week, at two public festivals, 11 people with the Revolution Club have been arrested on ridiculous pretexts. In one case, they are mainly charged with misdemeanor obstructing/resisting a peace [sic] officer. This is punishable by up to one year in jail. There were also citations for violation of sound ordinances. In the other case, the charges are criminal [sic] trespass on a public street!

They were not, in fact, violating any law or sound ordinance. What they were doing was spreading a message among sections of the oppressed who are trapped on the bottom of this society—ideas that the authorities clearly consider “dangerous.” The Revolution Club representatives were powerfully exposing the crimes of this system and how they flow from the very nature of this capitalist-imperialist system. Telling the truth that this cannot be reformed but requires that this system of capitalism must be overthrown by millions, and that there is a strategy and a leadership for how to do this. The Revolution Club was distributing a pamphlet titled, “HOW WE CAN **WIN**—How We Can **Really Make Revolution**.”

How do we know this is escalating political repression? The pattern—in what the police and prosecutors DO and what they SAY—makes this clear. Here is just some of the evidence:

At the June 16 arrest at the Puerto Rican Day parade, in the midst of music blaring everywhere as vendors hawked their wares, the Revolution Club set up a display and staged a rally on a corner of a vacant lot along the parade route. As Noche Diaz, a representative of the Revolution Club, denounced the outrageous treatment of people in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria; the demonization of immigrants and the literal ripping of immigrant children from their parent’s arms in Trump’s America, the police surrounded this Black, white, and Latino crew in Revolution Club t-shirts. Noche then called out the role of the police in enforcing this brutal system.

Right after a high ranking officer, who is captured on video saying over his radio “second warning for inciting the crowd,” at least twenty police swarmed and brutally arrested seven people shortly before the parade was to begin.

Incitement means directly calling on people to perform an imminent illegal action. The Revolution Club was calling on people to learn about and get organized for a revolution, which is legally protected speech (well established in Supreme Court rulings). This clearly indicates the police were reacting to the content of the speech.

This was a pre-emptive style arrest, sweeping up and holding the Revolution Club till wee hours of the morning to prevent this message from being heard in Humboldt Park on that day. If the Revolution Club could not get a hearing, why even bother with these arrests when the police must have had their hands full with a major parade? The authorities were afraid—there were thousands of people from the Puerto Rican community gathered, many of whom are seething over the cruel abandonment of people in the wake of the hurricane, resulting in 1000’s of deaths and massive displacement and still no reliable electrical grid. **This was suppression of political expression, pure and simple.**

- In March, a Revolution Club member was arrested for taking part in 11 minutes of silence for 11 million immigrants in the student center at the University of Chicago and charged with a felony for this silent, non-violent witness. At her bail hearing, in a highly unusual and revealing move, the prosecutor read from a sheet of paper telling the judge she should be denied bail because she is a “RevCom,” further informing the judge that this is the Revolutionary Communist Party. The prosecutor also raised previous arrests for Revolution Club activity, which had already been dismissed, to bolster the claim that she was dangerous.

This was a political dossier. Where did it come from? It didn’t show what the prosecutor claimed but it **did** reveal the politically motivated harassment of the Revolution Club. Further, at a recent court hearing the judge threatened to revoke the bail on

(over)

the defendant because she had silently raised her fist when joining her supporters in court, and then the judge threatened the supporters with contempt for giving the fist in response to the judge's threat to revoke the bail!

• A week before the arrests at the Puerto Rican Day parade at a street festival in Back of the Yards (a Latino and Black neighborhood), Joe Veale a former Black Panther and a supporter of the Revolutionary Communist Party, along with three other members of the Revolution Club, were set upon by the police right after they began speaking to people out on the street and getting out the pamphlet HOW WE CAN WIN—How We Can Really Make Revolution. Joe was exposing the police murder of Maurice Granton, Jr. that had happened just days before in a neighboring predominately Black community. The high-ranking officer who took them to the squadrol kept saying, “this is not political”—as if repeating this would wash off the highly political character of the arrests.

In all of these arrests, sound systems and boxes of pamphlets were seized and are still being held. Women defendants report invasive and intentionally humiliating searches. The authorities aim is clearly to chill the Revolution Club from boldly going out to speak to people especially in minority communities. The police and the authorities are declaring that they will determine what political ideas and movements oppressed people can be exposed to and consider taking up as their own. All this is very dangerous precedent.

And this is part of a pattern by the Chicago Police Department

This current wave of arrests is a continuation and escalation of what happened last summer. Many of the arrests in 2017 were in Engelwood, where the 7th District is Chicago's model of “community policing”—code words for developing surveillance, networks of informants, and riding roughshod on a part of the city where violence among the people has taken a heart breaking toll. The commander of the 7th District personally directed or defended the arrests as well as the harassment of people in the community. Youth in the neighborhood who wanted to learn about the club and take part in political activities were threatened by the police, ordered to take off the Revolution Club's t-shirt or there would be hell to pay.

A legal observer of Revolution Club rallies and arrests in Englewood documented the repeated statements of the district commander that he did not want the Revolution Club there because he did not like their message. When told repeatedly by the attorney that he cannot suppress this protected First Amendment activity because he didn't like the content, he then threatened, “I will do it legally. I will make sure that I enforce every law that I can find against *this* group.”

What you can do

This blatant political repression must be exposed and opposed. Your help—and your voice—is needed now.

If you are a journalist, we ask that you investigate and report on this illegal campaign of harassment being carried out by the Chicago Police Department (CPD). Who was the high-ranking officer speaking to over his radio to get the authorization for the arrests? Who provided the prosecutor with a political dossier on a Revolution Club member? What would the Freedom of Information Act on these arrests show? You can interview the defendants and let them tell their story.

If you are a lawyer, help defend those arrested. And help us fashion legal responses to the whole pattern of selective prosecution, harassment and suppression of First Amendment activity at the whim of the CPD. **The Revolution Club intends to fight for a restraining order against the CPD but we need legal help *as soon as possible* to do this.**

If you are someone who sees the dangerous precedents being set here, if you support the rights of the Revolution Club to share their message especially with those who have been locked out and locked down, if you are reminded of the quote from Pastor Martin Niemöller under the Nazis that, “First they came for the communists, but I did not speak out because I was not a communist...” help us oppose and defeat this political repression. Learn from history—raise your voice, come to court hearings, and share this. Together let's put the authorities on notice that many people are watching.

Very importantly: **DONATE MUCH NEEDED FUNDS** to replace seized equipment, mount legal defenses and legal challenges, and to support the work of the Revolution Club. One reason authorities arrest people over and over is to tie them up and drain their resources (as well as setting them up with records for more serious prosecution along the line). If, instead, these efforts at suppression boomerang and draw more support to the side of the revolutionaries then the authorities have more to weigh in carrying out their repression.

Revolution Club Chicago:

(312) 804-9121 • Revclub.chi@gmail.com • facebook.com/revclubchi • 1857 E. 71st Street, Chicago, IL 60649

www.revcom.us