

Greetings, and thank you for allowing input from citizens concerned about March 11.

I was there on Dorset Street from about 8:25 am to 7:15 pm, with a break midday to pick up and drop off a child elsewhere.

I am a mother, a teacher, a retiree, a community business owner, a Unitarian Universalist, a pacifist, and more.

I am increasingly alarmed at the lawlessness of ICE and I felt compelled to be a Constitutional Observer after the events of Minneapolis.

In the interest of not repeating what I have seen many say more eloquently than I can, I will add a few things I've heard less often.

I was proud to be part of a 99% peaceful, singing, experienced, smart, thoughtful, kind, brave group of protectors, many of whom made efforts to de-escalate throughout the day. I was surrounded by neighbors, co-congregants, friends, people I know from the Y, etc. It was a true cross-section of Burlington.

Seeing the photo circulated mid-afternoon of the State Police readying at Hannafords in full riot gear was terrifying and escalated the tension, fear, and anger quite a bit for many present. When somebody (ICE?) rolled up to say they had gotten the warrant and asked us to disperse, with no bullhorn, as the majority were facing the house and singling loudly, literally about 20 of 300+ could hear him or understand the directive or the implications. (I have this on video. S.B. Deputy Chief Sean Briscoe tried to tell him we couldn't hear, but he wouldn't listen or change tactics.)

I was standing on the curb when all the cars then rolled up and discharged people, masked and unmasked, armed to the teeth, some in street clothes, others in multiple variations of uniforms, many with no badges or name tags. It was SHOCKING. You can hear me sobbing like a baby as I film their intimidating march from car to door. I simply couldn't believe the show of force, how the situation had escalated unnecessarily, how upsetting it is to see supposed law-enforcement officers unidentified, masked, badges removed, in the U.S.A.

When the crowd saw/felt that, then saw protestors thrown from the stairs to the ground, witnessed the brutal and unnecessary ramming of the door, heard alarming thumps inside for what seemed like 20 minutes, and then saw three innocent people (unnamed in the warrant) marched out, and the cooperation of local officials (some of whom had been helpful and reasonable earlier in the day) was what angered and shocked everyone into more intense confrontations.

While I do agree that local law enforcement may have prevented deaths from ICE officers, they also did harm and escalated the situation. You must develop a different plan for next time, pushing back against ICE, de-escalating and actually talking to protectors earlier and more often, etc.

If local law enforcement can't stand up to ICE, how are unarmed, untrained, everyday citizens supposed to?! Try to think through the lens of history and how we will talk about all this in 20 years, and be on the right side of history and do not aid, abet, cooperate with these poorly vetted and trained goons who are kidnapping and killing our neighbors and our people.

Respectfully,

Valerie Wood-Lewis