



June 8, 2020

These Protests Have Not Been Hijacked. The Message is Clear. We Need Change.

In Representative Keller's recent email newsletter dated June 7th, the Congressman wrote, with regards to protests over the death of George Floyd in police custody, that he was "disappointed to see these protests be hijacked by groups of bad actors, like Antifa."

These protests have not been "hijacked." There is little to no evidence of antifa's or other outside actor's large scale involvement in the protests. The Associated Press reviewed records, social media posts and more for 217 people arrested in Minneapolis and DC and found those arrested to be largely local with only a few appearing to be affiliated in any way with an organized group. (Biesecker et al, 2020). Furthermore, "The FBI has found no evidence that the American militant anti-fascist movement Antifa was involved in violence that erupted during national protests over the death of George Floyd." (Lee, 2020)

Claims that the protests have been "hijacked" by outside groups or that demonstrators are "outsiders" are not only unsupported by the facts, they distract from and undermine the validity of the message. These claims point to a disbelief that people could be moved to act, or enraged to violence in some cases, without outside influence.

Protests continue across the Commonwealth and across the Nation. For the most part, especially since the officers involved in George Floyd's death have been charged, people are peacefully exercising their First Amendment rights to assemble and petition the government for "redress of grievances." And there are grievances. And they need to be taken seriously.

Those responsible for the violence and destruction should be held to account, but their actions do not "hijack" the protest. They do not negate the multitudes of peaceful protesters. Their actions should not be allowed to distract us from, and certainly don't diminish, the need for change.

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References

Biesecker, M., Kunzleman, M., Bleiberg, J. and Richer, A.D. (2020, June 6). As Trump blames antifa, protest records show scant evidence. *Associated Press*. Retrieved from <http://apnews.com>

Lee, A. (2020, June 6). FBI finds no evidence of Antifa's involvement in national unrest. *Atlantic Journal-Constitution*. Retrieved from <http://ajc.com>