



**Des Moines Black Liberation Movement**  
comms@desmoinesblm.org  
@DesMoinesBLM

APRIL 8, 2021

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
**STATEMENT ON APRIL 8 ARREST AT THE IOWA STATE CAPITOL**

Today, community members gathered at the Iowa State Capitol in support of a protest organized by Advocates for Social Justice (ASJ). The group, based out of Cedar Rapids, was calling for several racist and dangerous bills at the statehouse to be killed. These bills included SF534, SF476, SF479 and HF802.

SF534 Hurts protestors' rights by expanding criminal penalties and would allow people to hit protesters with their vehicles.

SF476 Expands qualified immunity and increases protection for dangerous cops.

SF479 Withholds all state funds from cities that defund or reallocate their police budgets.

HF802 Bans all racism, sexism/gender affirming and diversity/equity/inclusion training at publicly-funded Iowa schools, universities and government agencies.

These bills are meant to criminalize first amendment activity, strengthen qualified immunity and suppress Black scholarship and literature in Iowa's public schools. These bills represent an existential threat for all Black Iowans.

About 3 dozen community members were gathered inside the Capitol building, on the first floor rotunda. This is a space open to the public, and people were demonstrating non-violently to their state legislators, exercising their first amendment rights.

Josie Mulvihill, a high school student and organizer with Norwalk BLM, was present at the event. She was speaking to officers from the Iowa State Patrol and asking them for their badge numbers, well within her rights. One of the officers she spoke to, DJ Hernandez, grabbed her, handcuffed her and arrested her. She was then shoved face-down on the ground. This arrest was illegal and unconstitutional.

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Immediately after this, right-wing commentators began posting footage of today's event to Twitter, calling it an "insurrection," and saying "BLM has forced their way into the Iowa State Capitol building." These are outright lies and weak attempts to discredit our movement, which is a life-affirming and justice-seeking movement. This tactic of political misinformation is a recurring pattern amongst white nationalist movements.

In January, after the actual insurrection attempt in Washington D.C., state senator Zach Whiting made the comparison to our summer protests at the Iowa State Capitol, saying "our capitol was under siege in June," and "we were.... counting guns and bullets, cause we didn't know if we were gonna make it out or if we were gonna have to shoot our way out." After we called out Whiting for this lie, he acknowledged that his testimony of the event was false and admitted that there was no actual danger, as he had previously claimed. Government officials, reports, and law enforcement officials continue to spread misinformation about our demonstrations. These lies could cost us our lives. At the very least, they create an environment that is perpetually unsafe and in which the truth is almost impossible to discern.

Members of our community have gathered since May 2020 in opposition to racist systems and structures present in this city and state. Our community has always gathered with non-violent intent and used our collective voice to raise awareness to issues of justice that our elected officials have ignored and perpetuated. Indeed, we must continue to engage in first amendment activity because our freedom depends on our ability to exercise our individual and collective civil liberties. The culpability for violence at any and all events has been at the hands of law enforcement officers. We will not be intimidated by law enforcement or those seeking to destroy our movement. We will continue to uplift, support and fight for the liberation of ALL Black people.

All peace and power to all the people.