

# Radical Women

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February 14, 2018

Dear Ali Lee and other Women's March organizers,

I'm writing on behalf of Radical Women to raise serious political problems with how security was handled for the January 20 Women's March and your approach to dealing with far-right misogynist disrupters. We strongly protest the behavior of Crowd Management Services, Inc. (CMS), which you hired for the march. *We call on you to release a public statement apologizing for hiring private security that exhibited a bureaucratic and hostile attitude toward Women's March participants. We further hope you will commit not to privatize security/marshalling at future events.*

At the pre-march rally, Radical Women took the lead in organizing a vocal defense against the alt-right group, Patriot Prayer, whose stated aim was to disrupt the Women's March. Patriot Prayer gathered at an entrance to Cal Anderson Park and used two bullhorns to amplify their anti-abortion and anti-feminist provocations.

Radical Women collaborated with Freedom Socialist Party and Party for Socialism and Liberation to form a line separating the bigots from march attendees. We passed out flyers explaining who Patriot Prayer is, held up banners and picket signs to block their misogynist message, and rallied the crowd in chants against far-right attacks. This disciplined line was very effective in sidelining Patriot Prayer thugs and preventing one-on-one altercations.

During this time, two CMS supervisors came up and declared we could not use *our* bullhorn even though the ultra-rightists were spewing inflammatory, anti-feminist rhetoric over *their* bullhorns. When we protested, CMS security said Patriot Prayer was outside the park and therefore could do what they wanted, but since the Women's March had a permit for the park we couldn't use bullhorns inside the fence. We pointed out that, first, we were part of the Women's March and had been at planning meetings where Patriot Prayer's possible provocations were discussed; second, that keeping them outside event was precisely what we hoped to achieve.

Radical Women member Su Docekal, who has decades of experience organizing security for rallies and anti-fascist actions, assured the CMS people they had no cause to focus on us. Our bullhorn was keeping our side focused and not allowing people to be individually targeted. She urged CMS to pay attention to Patriot Prayer, which had already made one foray into the crowd.

The CMS operatives left, but returned about 15 minutes later with 20 additional guards. They gathered three-deep in front of us and began pushing us backwards – straight into the Patriot Prayer group. We attempted to hold our ground, calling on CMS security to stop harassing us and help defend the Women’s March from Patriot Prayer.

As security pushed us, Patriot Prayer took the opportunity to infiltrate the crowd with their bullhorns and giant anti-abortion and homophobic signs, again trying to provoke a fight. We urged CMS to stop them from disrupting the rally. The CMS employees dispersed. A couple followed Patriot Prayer into the crowd, but it was clear they had no plan.

Radical Women and other protesters followed Patriot Prayer into the crowd, chanting and surrounding them with signs. People nearby joined in and isolated the bigots with a spirited and disciplined presence. Ultimately, the police formed a circle around Patriot Prayer and they were gradually pushed off to the side of the park.

At a January 18 planning meeting for the march, Radical Women members Su Docekal and Annaliza Torres heard the security presentation given by CMS. Torres and Docekal shared our experience last summer in successfully countering Patriot Prayer. They explained the approach we intended to take on January 20 to which there was no objection from CMS or the organizers. The CMS representative said their job was to be a buffer between the crowd and right-wing counter-protestors. CMS said it would ensure that Women’s March attendees could get their message out. Two days later they did just the opposite.

We are shocked that CMS treated us feminists as the problem and claimed to do so representing the organizers. Is that the case?

It is clear CMS has no idea what community free speech and protest is about. We later learned that CMS staff also blocked the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women’s contingent from stopping at the John T. Williams memorial totem pole at the Seattle Center. This is an incredibly disrespectful way to treat the group that was asked to lead the march!

Privatizing security at political marches and rallies is flat-out wrong. I have never experienced a political march that didn’t use volunteer marshals who respected its purpose. The corporate/bureaucratic approach to security was strongly motivated by representatives of the Truman National Security Project, a State Department-associated group that had a leadership role in march planning and that we feel contributed to the event’s conservative abandonment of longstanding community practices.

Building a bold, disciplined, united, community-based opposition is our best defense against the increasingly aggressive far-right groups like Patriot Prayer and the white supremacists and fascists with whom they are allied. They will not just go away if we ignore them, as Truman Project representatives recommended.

*Again, we request that Women's March organizers release a statement apologizing for hiring private security that treated anti-fascist protesters and Native American women with hostility and disrespect. To discuss further, please contact me at 206-722-6057 or [rwseattle@mindspring.com](mailto:rwseattle@mindspring.com).*

Sincerely,

Gina Petry  
Organizer, Radical Women-Seattle chapter