

By San Francisco Bay Area World Can't Wait Chapter



Monday, July 23, 2012, as Obama came to the Bay Area for multiple campaign fundraising appearances, a large protest crowd was in the streets of downtown Oakland for hours. An anti-war action was called by World Can't Wait, Afghans for Peace, Iraq Veterans Against the War, Code Pink, the Bradley Manning Support Network and Courage to Resist and we were there with banners and signs aloft. Near the Fox Theater (the Obama rally site) we gathered with more groups: Occupy Oakland and Redwood City, Vets for Peace, students. There were other clusters of protest scattered around the area at different times: youth protesting for immigrant rights, Occupiers, environmentalists. Also there were lots of people who had earlier been at a large rally for medical marijuana (the feds have raided major Oakland dispensaries despite their legality and despite Obama's "promises").

The police had barricaded the entire area around the Fox Theater for several blocks in all directions. They had also ordered all businesses to close early. People with Obama tickets had to snake through a barricaded line from blocks away. But still about 200 protesters gathered within eyesight of the theater by 4:30, eventually growing to 300. Right against the barricades

and police cars, we lofted banners and signs about Bradley Manning, about drones, about the wars. World Can't Wait had big No Drones and "Crimes Are Crimes" signs. We also carried two huge banners that no one could miss: "Stop the U.S. Criminal War in Afghanistan" in English, Dari and Pashto, and "The Richest Country In the World Is Destroying One of the Poorest" in English and Spanish.

Much chanting, much spirited raising of voices. People shared our giant bullhorn for a running speak-out: Iraq vets, Courage to Resist/Bradley Manning Support, Occupiers, writer Larry Everest, Oakland youth activists. World Can't Wait gave out new shirt posters: "A vote for Obama = A vote for: * Targeted Assassinations; * Indefinite Detention * Extraordinary Rendition" and many people pinned them on. A lot of people reading our "Crimes are Crimes" flyer said they had not previously known many of the damning facts in it.

After several hours, with Obama about to arrive, about 150 people decided to "march around the Fox Theater" and we flowed out onto the street. The march wound around the area, loudly chanting – it stopped at intersections and held them for a while, then moved on. We never saw Obama of course – the enormous police presence and barricaded "security zone" made sure of that – but we were seen and heard by a lot of people in the area, first the several thousand Obama supporters waiting in line, and then as we marched and chanted through what has begun to look like a Condo Canyon (a major gentrification of Oakland). And of course there were plenty of cameras and media people of all kinds.

Some sharp chants at the top of our lungs:

B-A-R . . . A-C-K

How many kids did you kill today?

(When Obama supporters chanted "Four More Years...." "Four More Years")

Four More Wars! Four More Wars!

1, 2, 3, 4, We Don't Want Your F***ing War!

Free Bradley Manning!

Whose Streets? Our Streets!

Whose Wars? Their Wars!

And within this mix, from World Can't Wait's voice people heard these true and factual statements – good conversations (and we also shouted and chanted about it all):

Crimes Are Crimes, No Matter Who Does Them

No Wars, No Drones, No Torture, No Kill Lists, No Matter Who the President Is

Obama, Obama, There's Blood On Your Hands – From Iraq and Libya to Afghanistan

A Vote for Obama Supports War, Drones, Torture, Kill Lists, Extraordinary Rendition, Indefinite

Detention.....

We Don't Have to Choose Between Republican Lunatic Fascists and Democrat War Criminals!
We Have Another Choice! Break Out of the Box and Resist All Their Crimes!

Eventually after Obama's rally and the big protest outside it was over, a smaller but determined Occupy group stayed in the street, still marching, still chanting, trying to make their way to protest outside the Oakland police station.

