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Despite outcry from pols, rally participants say they're not racist

Antonio Planas Monday, August 21, 2017



Credit: Courtesy

(Boston, Ma 081917) Senate candidate Shiva Ayyadurai (center), a participant in the freedom of speech rally at the Parkman Bandstand talks with police before making his way to the bandstand. August 19, 2017 Staff photo by Chris Christo

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Some participants in Saturday's "Free Speech Rally" on Boston Common are rejecting the idea they are bigots affiliated with hate groups such as neo-Nazis or the KKK.

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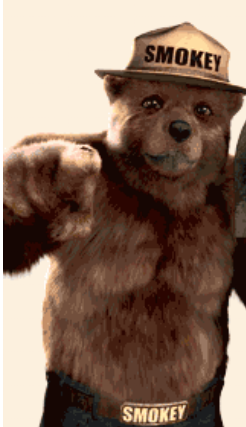
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But Mayor Martin J. Walsh insisted yesterday white supremacists did take part in the rally that drew 40,000 counterprotesters to drown out their voices.

“Charlie Baker and Marty Walsh tried to jump over each other on how anti-racists they were. There were no racists there. This is completely made up,” said Shiva Ayyadurai, an Indian-American who spoke at the Parkman Bandstand Saturday and provided the Herald with a video of his 12-minute speech.

Ayyadurai, a Republican who is running for U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren’s seat, blasted Democratic politicians such as Hillary Clinton and Harry Reid as the real racists for some controversies in their past. But he also told the crowd

multiple times “black lives do matter” and said speakers on the side of free speech were unfairly branded as racist.

“In 1982, I fought the KKK ... right here as an activist. I fought racism at MIT when MIT had investments in South African Apartheid. ... Does that sound like a white supremacist?” he said in remarks that were caught on video.

Police did not allow reporters close enough to the bandstand to hear the rally speakers, citing safety concerns.

In the video provided by Ayyadurai, two people at the bandstand with the rally participants — separated from counterprotesters by police barriers — held up “Black Lives Matter” signs. Several other people who appear to be minorities can also be seen within the rally barriers.

Walsh said in a statement, “There were a couple of white supremacists participating in the rally, as well as a sprinkling of other people with different beliefs, and some Trump supporters. Boston police arrested three people who had bulletproof vests on, including one with a gun on him, and we believe they were white supremacists.”

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Organizers, who could not be reached for comment yesterday, last week said the KKK was not welcome, and insisted they were not white supremacists. Rally participant April Sutherland of Medford, when asked yesterday if white supremacists were there, said, "Not at all. I talked to a few people there. They were from the Green Party, they were Bernie Sanders supporters. There were a couple of black guys there."

Rinaldo Del Gallo, a Bernie Sanders supporter who intended to speak at the event but was not allowed to by police when his name did not show up on a speakers list, said he is considering a lawsuit claiming his civil rights were violated.

"In terms of protecting free speech, I have to give them an F. No one could be heard. Speakers couldn't get in to speak. And people who wanted to hear the speakers couldn't get anywhere near the podium," Del Gallo said.



More On: Free Speech Rally neo-Nazi KKK Marty Walsh Shiva Ayyadurai

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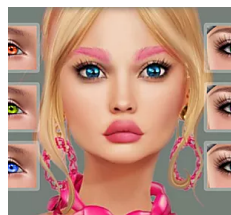
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