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FEATURED

Senatorial Candidate Shiva Ayyadurai Keynotes Boston Rally; Supporters Say Event a Success

PTI 7 hrs ago



Indian American candidate for U.S. senator Shiva Ayyadurai, addressing a rally in Boston Aug. 19, 2017. (Twitter/Dr. Shiva Ayyadurai photo)

BOSTON — Despite being outnumbered by tens of thousands of counter-protesters, their event was a success, said supporters of a small, conservative "free speech rally" held in Boston Aug. 19, for which Indian American candidate for U.S. senator Shiva Ayyadurai gave the keynote address.

Demonstrators protesting against racism and white supremacy had descended upon the historic Boston Common, dwarfing the rally's few dozen attendees and leading to what appeared to be an abrupt end of the event. Less than an hour after rallygoers arrived, they were escorted out of the area by police, as boisterous counter-protesters scuffled with officers.

But event organizers, speakers and participants say coverage of the event has been mischaracterized and that it accomplished its purpose to talk about the importance of free speech.

"We were there to discuss the spectrum of American views," said Ayyadurai, who gave the keynote at the rally.


Ayyadurai, a Cambridge technology entrepreneur who is seeking the GOP nomination to challenge Democratic U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren, added that the crowd was a politically and racially diverse group of mostly students. In the days leading up to the long-planned Aug. 19 event, organizers publicly distanced themselves from the Aug. 12 white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, that left a woman dead and many more injured.

Addressing concerns that a similar event might come to Boston, Democratic Mayor Marty Walsh had denounced "hate groups" that would potentially attend the Boston gathering. But when asked about the atmosphere at the Parkman Bandstand on the Common where supporters gathered Aug. 19, participants described the opposite of what opponents had feared.

"I was holding one of the 'Black Lives Do Matter' signs," said attendee April Sutherland, 25, of Seattle. Photos show the signs being held up as Ayyadurai was speaking.

Officials say about 40,000 people attended.

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