



# Dueling protests clash

## Hundreds converge on streets of Shelton

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Hundreds of supporters of Black Lives Matter and Back the Blue demonstrated in adjoining rallies Sunday in downtown Shelton, with the two groups at one point shouting face to face in front of the Mason County Courthouse before police and sheriff's deputies carrying rifles stepped between them.

No injuries or arrests were reported, despite concerns about violence that led several downtown business owners to board up their windows.

The Back the Blue demonstrators were scheduled to rally in support of law officers at 2 p.m. at the intersection of First Street and West Railroad Avenue, but they arrived early and spread out across five blocks to Evergreen Square at Fifth Street and Railroad. Many carried rifles and handguns.

"We're not here for peaceful protesters," said Shelton resident Dee Kay, one of the organizers. "We're here for agitators with bad intentions."

"We're not worried about the in-town protesters, we're worried about out-of-towners" from Olympia and Seattle, he said.

Kay said the rally's participants are not white supremacists.

"None of us are here to start trouble ... We're just here to make sure nothing happens," he said.

"I hope everybody stays calm," said George Blush, the owner of Nita's Koffee Shop on West Railroad Avenue, who gathered with the Back the Blue group. "I don't carry a gun. I just hope every-



**TOP:** Carrying a U.S. flag, a marcher walks down Franklin Street in Shelton on Sunday afternoon. **Hundreds of people in Black Lives Matter and Back the Blue rallies converged on the streets of downtown Shelton. ABOVE:** A Back the Blue marcher carries a flag signifying the thin blue line in support of police. See more photos of the marches on pages A-12 and A-13. Journal photos by Shawna Whelan

body stays safe ... There's been too much fighting." Blush added, "I want peace. I want calm. I don't want to see anyone hurt."

The Black Lives Matter demonstrators gathered a block away at Post Office Park. By 1:30 p.m., a half hour before the scheduled event, only 18 people had arrived; that number would increase to about 100 before they left the park and other supporters then joined them as they marched through downtown.

"I'm a little bit worried about the hate, and people threatening," said Shelton resident Gwendolyn Burlette. "That's scary. But that makes me want to be here."

Burlette added, "We're not here to harm, or damage any businesses ... I hope they're there to support their cause, like we are."

Shelton resident Katherine Price said she was inspired to attend after hearing George Floyd call out for his mother while a Minneapolis police officer was killing him. She wasn't sure whether the group would leave the park to march.

"We've got rednecks all around us," Price said. "I think it would be too provocative."

The Black Lives Matter demonstrators left Post Office Park heading north, away from the other demonstration. But the Back the Blue demonstrators followed them, many waving American flags. Unlike the Black Lives Matter demonstrators, most of them did not wear face masks. They shouted, "Go back to Seattle!" and "Get a job!"

Black Lives Matter organizers used megaphones to instruct the marchers.

"Do not engage!"

"Do not engage with racists!"

"Stay together, stay cool!"

They chanted, "No Trump, no KKK, no fascist USA!"

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ABOVE: From left, fourth-generation Shelton residents Jessica Churchill, Laura Watson and Joe Cloin show up to support the police Sunday on West Railroad Avenue in Shelton. BELOW: A truck bearing flags of the United States and support of President Donald Trump travels down Seventh Street in Shelton. Journal photos by Shawna Whelan

## Protest: No damage, arrests

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After the Black Lives Matter marchers reached the Mason County Courthouse, they stopped and faced the Back to Blue demonstrators who had followed them. They traded chants.

“Black lives matter!”

“All lives matter!”

The marchers then met in the middle of the street, some going nose to nose. That’s when about 10 Shelton police officers and Mason County Sheriff’s deputies carrying rifles stepped between the two groups. Members of the Washington State Patrol were also

present.

The two groups then headed toward the busy intersection of Seventh Street and West Railroad Avenue, where they shouted at each other across Seventh Street. Both sides then congregated on Franklin Avenue, in front of the Mason Transit Authority’s Transit-Community Center in one large group before participants began to walk away.

Shelton Police Chief Darrin Moody said there were no arrests, damage or injuries related to the events.

“We very much appreciate the support our community has shown for us,” he said.



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