

Campaigning in Detroit, Trump incites violence against immigrants

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With the US presidential election less than five months away, former president Donald Trump and the Republicans are seeking to capitalize on mass anger among workers and youth against President Joe Biden and the Democratic Party over their war-mongering and anti-worker policies. Michigan, with a population of over 10 million people and 15 Electoral College votes, is viewed by both campaigns as a “must win” state.

To this end, the “People’s Convention” organized by Turning Point USA, a fascistic political organization headed by Charlie Kirk, held a political convention in Detroit this weekend. It was one of several major right-wing events recently held, or scheduled to be held, by Trump-aligned elements in Detroit. The week prior, Christian pastor Clay Travis and retired Gen. Michael Flynn, formerly Trump’s national security advisor, hosted the “ReAwaken America” tour in Detroit.

The People’s Convention lasted three days and featured dozens of Republican politicians, media personalities and fascist ideologues, including ex-president Trump.

In his Saturday night speech, Trump hit all of his reactionary talking points, repeatedly attacking immigrants and “globalists.” As he does in almost every appearance, Trump promised that on his first day in office he would close the US-Mexico border and began mass deportations.

Virtually every speaker at the event sang Trump’s praises and repeated variations of his campaign staples, including Republican Representatives Eli Crane (Arizona), Byron Donalds (Florida), Marjorie Taylor Greene (Georgia) and Matt Gaetz (Florida). Several of Trump’s January 6, 2021 co-conspirators participated in the event as well, including Alex Jones of *InfoWars*, Jack Posobiec, Steve Bannon and Roger Stone.

The concluding speech was given on Sunday by Ohio Senator J.D. Vance. After the event concluded, a Trump vice presidential straw poll was conducted among the attendees, with Vance garnering 43 percent of the vote, nearly three times as many as the second place finisher, Senator Tim Scott (South Carolina). Florida Senator Marco Rubio and North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum received 7.7 and 7.0 percent, respectively.

Of the over 10 million people who live in Michigan, close to 4 million reside in the Metro Detroit area, which includes the counties of Wayne, Oakland and Macomb. According to 2022 census figures, nearly half a million people in Detroit are African-American. In the 2020 election, Trump sought to invalidate the nearly 800,000 votes cast in Wayne County, which includes Detroit, as part of his bid to retain power after losing to Biden.

According to research by Poverty Solutions at the University of Michigan, some 40 percent of the population in Metro Detroit is “poor” or “struggling to afford the basic cost of living,” even while holding a job. One of the major costs for workers and their families is housing, with nearly 34 percent of Metro Detroit residents “cost burdened” by housing, meaning they spend over 30 percent of their income on their rent or mortgage payment.

The same research found that as of March 2024, seven percent of Metro Detroit residents did not have health insurance and over 14 percent were receiving food stamps.

While inflation is eating away at workers’ paychecks around the world, Detroit faces one of the highest rates of inflation in the US. According to recently published data by WalletHub, year-to-year inflation in Detroit is 3.5 percent, the fifth highest out of 23 major

metropolitan areas studied by the company. Honolulu, Hawaii had the highest rate at 5.2 percent, followed by Dallas at 5 percent, Seattle at 4.4 percent and San Francisco at 3.8 percent.

In a bid to capitalize on the brutal impact of inflation and social cuts under President Joe Biden, Trump held a “Church Roundtable” event at a black church in Detroit prior to speaking at the Turning Point convention. In an interview with the *Detroit Free Press*, Rev. Lorenzo Sewell of 180 Church said he supported neither Biden nor Trump, and was “shocked” to have received a call from the Trump campaign.

Introducing Trump, Sewell said he was “so humbled that you would be here,” adding, “President Obama never came to the hood, so to speak. President Joe Biden, he went to the big NAACP dinner, but he never came to the hood, so thank you.”

Prior to event, the Trump campaign announced the formation of the “Black Americans for Trump” voter outreach group. Members of the group include Rep. Donalds; former Detroit mayor and convicted fraudster and racketeer Kwame Kilpatrick; rappers Sexyy Red, Kodak Black and 50 Cent; boxer Mike Tyson and former Yankee and Met outfielder Daryl Strawberry.

In his comments, Trump sought to pit worker against worker along the lines of race and immigration status. He blamed Biden for allowing “millions of illegal aliens” to “pour in” and take “your jobs.”

Trump declared that the “black community” was “getting hurt more by the illegal aliens... That are affecting African-Americans, and after that, the Hispanic Americans, more than any group.”

Repeating his standard fascistic agitation against migrant workers, he added, “We are being inundated with... terrorists at levels we have never seen before.”

Following Trump’s brief remarks, Rev. Sewell said a closing prayer in which he noted that Trump “was charged with 34 felonies, then he raised \$53 million in 24 hours and he has the potential to be the 47th president.”

Sewell asked God to “speak to [Trump]... visit him with wisdom... Lift his hands up so that our country perhaps would be great again. And we believe specifically for black America that you would make black America great again.”

In its report on Trump’s visit to the 180 Church, the *Washington Post* wrote that not a single person it

interviewed at the event actually attended the church.

On June 15, the same night that Trump spoke at the Turning Point USA conference, a past Thanksgiving dinner guest of Trump’s, neo-Nazi Nick Fuentes, had planned to convene the fourth “America First Political Action Conference” at the Russell Industrial Center in Detroit. However, Fuentes wrote on social media Saturday that the event was canceled after the venue called the police on him.

In an interview in the *Detroit Free Press*, an official with the center said it had been “tricked” by a third party into hosting Fuentes’ fascist conference. In a statement to the newspaper, a spokesman for the venue said:

The event was canceled due to fraudulent, knowing misrepresentation of the true nature of the event by the production company for their client, and our concern of safety for our faculty, employees, tenants, and the surrounding communities. The amount of hate mail we’ve been receiving and terrible things being said towards us by the AFPAC following is disturbing and only affirms our decision as the right one.

The day before his rally was canceled, Fuentes, former Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) fighter Jake Shields and other America First “groypers” crashed the Turning Point USA conference. After being quickly escorted out by security, Fuentes held a rally outside the venue, where he praised “the great industrialist Henry Ford” for “exposing the Jewish mafia.”



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