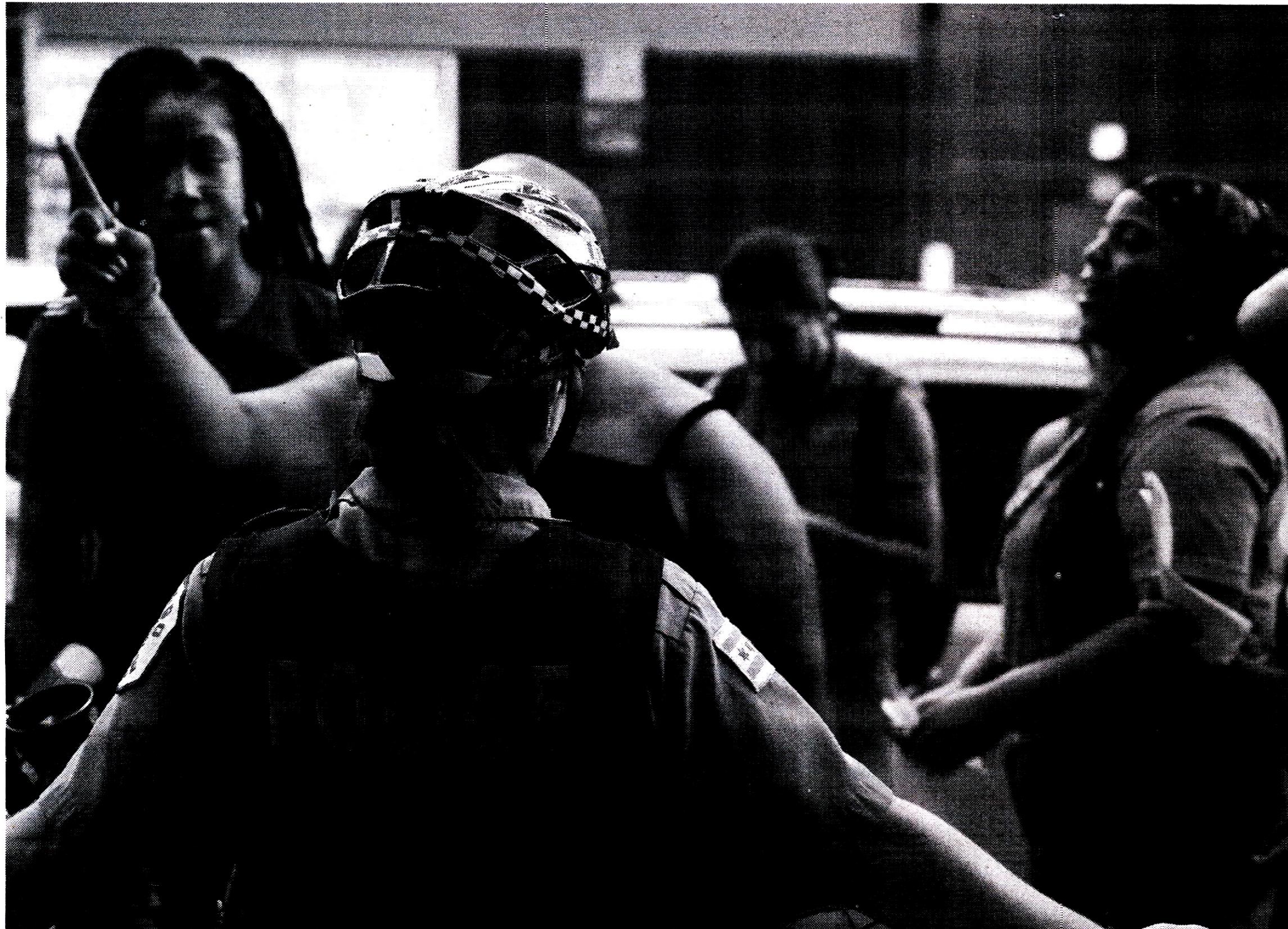


Politics

Aldermanic Black Caucus Fundraiser Interrupted By Youth Protestors



#NoCopAcademy Protestors stage Die-in outside of the Chicago Aldermanic Black Caucus Fundraiser as police try to keep protestors from entering the venue..

By Charles Preston
Defender Contributing Writer

It was shaping up to be a dazzling evening at Per.So.Na. Lounge, located at 408 S. Wells, with the City's Black elite in full force. Politicians, urban professionals, pastors, and City officials all converged downtown at the lounge for a celebratory fundraiser hosted by the Chicago Aldermanic Black Caucus (CABC). But the festive event that marked the first of its kind for the CABC, which was intended to provide money to students, was met with resistance by young people of color.

Before the fundraiser officially commenced, an enthused Ald. Roderick T. Sawyer (6th) told the *Defender* that the night's focus was for a "good cause."

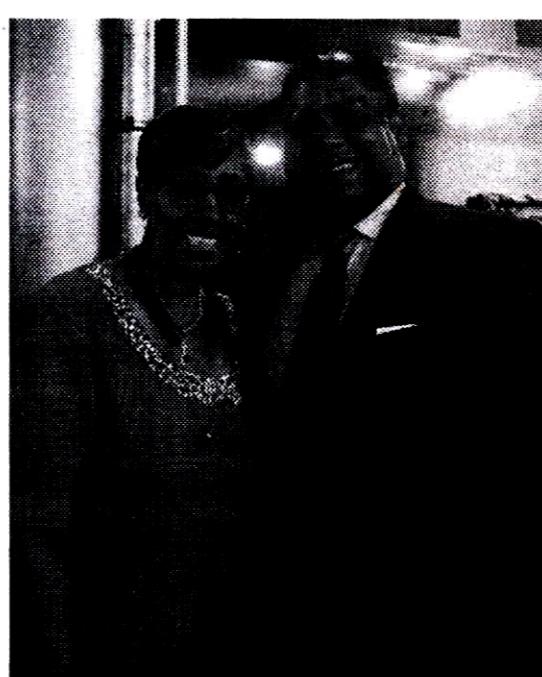
"We raise money for scholar-

ships for children. That is what this is all about," said Ald. Sawyer. "We're giving a chance for children to succeed in college. This is a new endeavor for us at the Black Caucus. This is not political. This is for the children."

Ald. Sawyer expected the fundraiser to garner "well over \$50,000" for students and anticipated more political events where the Black Caucus can publicly show a strong united front.

"I want to do more engagement sessions and listening tours," Ald. Sawyer explained. "I think people want to see us in the neighborhoods and in their community. I think people need to understand how government and civic action can work together as opposed to being diametrically opposed to one another."

The evening's guests were treated to food, wine, and beer. DJ



Aldermen Austin and Sawyer before the night commenced.

Alan King, husband of Ald. Sophia King (4th), was the man behind the chill sounds that permeated wall-to-wall in the lounge. The alderpersons made their way around the room socializing, taking pictures, and vibin' to the music until

a group started chanting outside the lounge's windows:

"From the Westside to the South!

Black Caucus we'll vote you out!

Black Caucus we'll vote you out!"

The fiery and vocal group – predominantly Black and teenaged – met a police barricade with officers and their bicycles. The group had two banners; several teens blocked the entrance with one banner displaying "Which Side Are You On? #NoCopAcademy,"

another group hoisted the second banner against Per.So.Na.'s large glass windows – it was designed as a checklist that posed the question "Who does the Black Caucus Serve?" with "Rahm", "CPD", and "Black Youth" as individual checkable boxes.



Alderman Carrie M. Austin (34th) looks at the #NoCop Academy protest

Their presence drew the attention of Ald. Sawyer and Ald. Carrie Austin (34th), who both rushed to the front entrance to momentarily observe the protest. The Black city council members stood stoically, protected behind the police barricade, as the energetic #NoCopAcademy youth looked officers in the eye and continuously shouted their protest anthems.

For over nine months, the #NoCopAcademy activists have been protesting against the city's effort to build a \$95 million police academy on Chicago's West Side, a decision that all Black Caucus members voted for despite the pushback. #NoCopAcademy believes that a new police academy is unnecessary and the \$95 million can prevent violence through the funding of community organizations, schools, and better public services. Unbeknownst to the politicians gazing at the scene, a grieving family was protesting with the youth.

Hours earlier, the Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA) publicly released the June 6th body cam video of a Black CPD officer fatally shooting 24-year-old Maurice Granton Jr. Granton Jr's sisters stood with the #NoCopAcademy protestors looking for police accountability and answers from city council members in the wake of their tragic loss.

Although the protest raged on, Black Caucus members continued to celebrate and mingle around the room. DJ Alan King's blaring music muffled demonstrators, chants and songs. Ald. Sawyer graced the stage to formally acknowledge

continued on page 6

Politics



Gubernatorial Candidate J.B. Pritzker delivers acknowledgements with Aldermen (l-r) Michelle Harris (8th), Roderick T. Sawyer (7th), Willie Cochran (20th), Anthony Beale (9th).

Black Caucus, continued from, Page 05

those in attendance. He then turned the microphone over to his "big sister" and the woman he "loves," Ald. Austin. As Ald. Austin started thanking guests, she was interrupted by a deep voice shouting "Mic check! Mic check!"

"No Cop Academy!" "No Cop Academy!" "No Cop Academy!" screamed a young Black man.

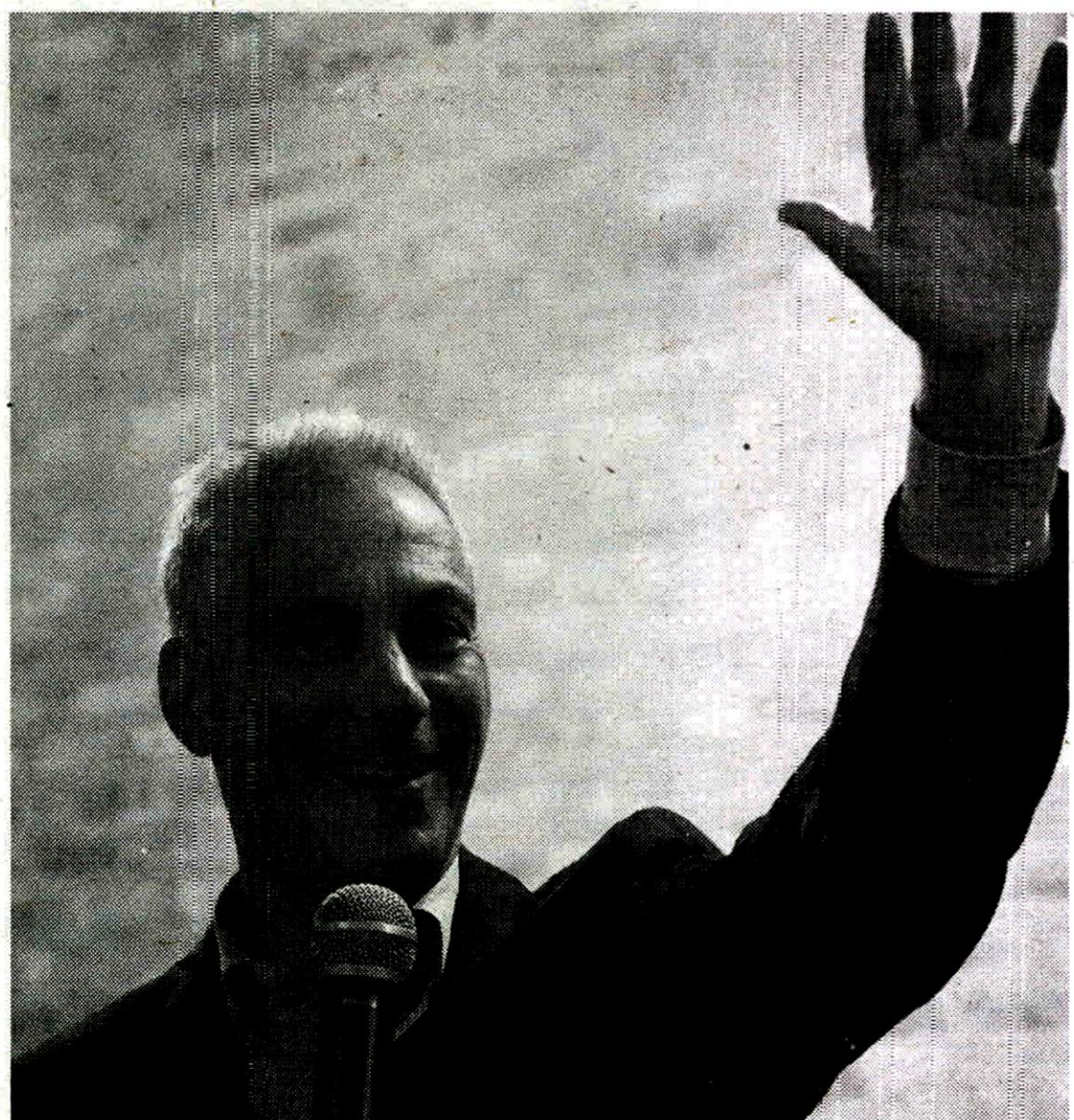
"Shut up!" retorted a visibly offended Austin. She continuously shouted "Bye!" as the lounge security aggressively grabbed the shouting man and pushed him out the door. Austin proceeded to thank those in the room as the attendees applauded the removal of the young man.

"You know we're here to have a good time," said Austin. "If you want to protest, take it outside."

"They must not know we got some gangsters in here," a smiling Ald. Willie Cochran (20th) added to keep the crowd in laughter.

"If anybody else wanna protest, you better take it outside," Austin said, laughing. "Cause I guarantee you ain't seen no gangsters like this City's aldermen. I guarantee you that we can throw it down."

Ald. Sawyer announced that the event accumulated \$100,000 in sponsorships and began thanking a long list of sponsors including Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Chicago Teachers Union, SEIU, and Ariel Investments. As Sawyer continued



Mayor Rahm Emanuel greets the Chicago Aldermanic Black Caucus and its guests.

listing sponsors, another disruption occurred:

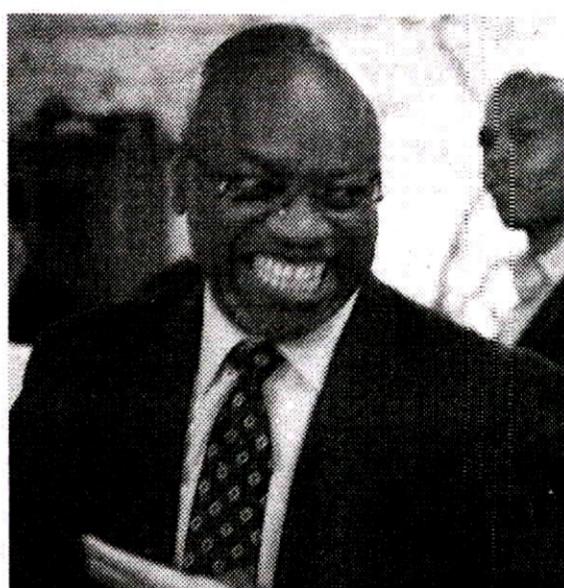
"Mic Check! Mic Check!" shouted Malcolm London, notable poet and member of BYP 100. "No Cop Academy! No Cop Academy!"

Security quickly headed towards London to forcibly remove him.

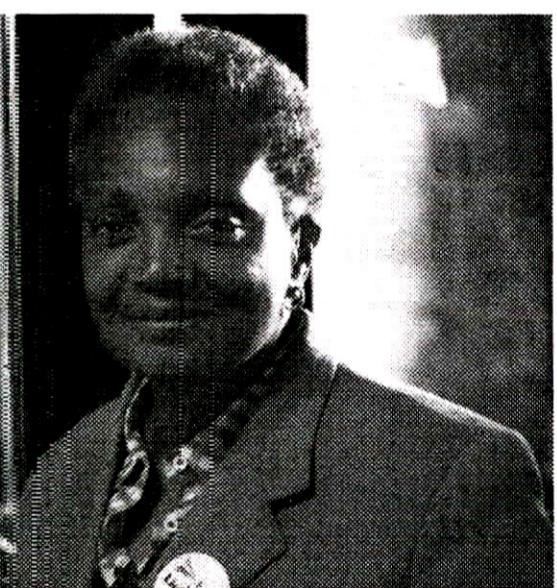
"Bye, Felicia!" quipped Ald.

Sawyer to the laughing crowd as everyone watched security force London's exit. London later told the *Defender* that "There is a clear disconnect between the Black Caucus and the Black people in their wards."

"If the Black Caucus cared about anything but their egos, we wouldn't have mental health clinics closed on the South and West



Alderman Willie Cochran (20th).



Mayoral candidate Lori Lightfoot.

sides, we wouldn't have schools constantly being closed, and we wouldn't be investing in a \$95 million cop academy while police are killing Black people without any repercussion," London lamented.

"When they kicked us out instead of inviting us to speak, they sent a clear message that they don't give a [expletive] about Black youth...[not] more than they care about kissing Rahm Emanuel's ass. Calling themselves 'gangsters' as they kicked out a young person the same day the footage of Maurice got released only added insult to injury."

Mayor Rahm Emanuel did make an appearance after the protests ended, as well as Gubernatorial candidate J.B. Pritzker. Emanuel received a warm welcome and emphasized the important victory of students receiving a full-day of Pre-K. The mayor also congratulated

the council members on successfully passing legislation that renames Congress Parkway after historic journalist and anti-lynching pioneer Ida B. Wells-Barnett.

The night's protests captured media and onlookers, but it is difficult to tell if it will have any substantial impact on the City's officials. Multiple alderpersons refused to comment on the youth demonstration. When asked about the disruption, Ald. Willie Cochran responded "What protest?" But it was Ald. Austin's remark that could probably crystallize the sentiment of the Black elected officials of the evening:

"Well I don't think they understand what their protest's about," declared Austin. "You're fighting against. Why can't you fight for? We gotta' learn to get into the fight for the benefit for all of us, not at the expense [of us]."

Reproduced with permission of copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.