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Protesters fill streets near SF climate summit, object to 'market-based' solutions

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Hundreds of demonstrators crowded the streets of downtown San Francisco on Thursday morning, banging drums and chanting as they called on local and world leaders at the Global Climate Action Summit to do more to address climate change and pollution.

"We're fighting for future generations," said Dorteia Enrique, who traveled from Detroit to take part in the protest. "We want them to listen to our voices and protect us from corporate greed."

It was the third day of demonstrations this week. On Saturday, thousands had marched through the city for "climate, jobs and justice," and Monday saw about 200 people, mainly indigenous groups, protesting Gov. Jerry Brown's Climate and Forest Task Force.

Thursday morning's demonstration came on day two of the summit, which has drawn more than 4,000 elected officials, business executives and environmentalists from six continents to San Francisco for a three-day conference aimed at addressing carbon emissions and climate change.

Demonstrators outside the conference's main venue at the Moscone Center said they were frustrated that they could not participate in the discussions inside and wanted to make sure their voices were heard.

In a call-and-response outside, they yelled: "What do we want? Climate justice!"

Protesters crowded the intersection of Howard and Third streets outside the Moscone Center throughout the morning, forcing summit delegates to climb over barriers or go around the gathering.

As the delegates walked past, one protester yelled out, “There’s more than just market-based solutions, folks! The market sucks, suit!” Another encouraged delegates to participate in the protest: “Join us! Join the community, not corporations!” They pointed out the irony in the plastic shrubbery that lined the sidewalks leading into a summit focused on the environment.

Shortly after noon, a small group of delegates inside the summit stood up, chanted “Mother Earth is not for sale,” and unfurled a 16-foot banner while former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg gave a speech. Dawn Phillips, a representative of Right to the City Alliance and one of the protesters inside, said the group felt its message was received.

The point of entering the summit as a delegate was twofold, Phillips said: “The ability to listen to what they’re saying, to arm ourselves. It was clearly also an opportunity to lift up our messaging.”

Police and security removed the group from the summit and revoked its members’ badges.

Officers also arrested two men during the protest outside. They were released after being cited for violations including trespassing and resisting a police officer.

Many at the demonstration were indigenous people who traveled from around the country to the summit. They highlighted environmental issues beyond carbon emissions alone. Many said they want to protect the lands they live on from being destroyed by pollution.

Jihan Gearon, a member of the Navajo Nation in Arizona, came with the Mesa Water Coalition to demand action.

“We’re not OK with them trading and selling in pollution, and impacts to our communities,” she said.

Brown organized this week’s summit to push back against the policies of President Trump, who last year pulled the United States out of the Paris climate agreement, a landmark deal ratified by 170 nations during President Barack Obama’s administration.

Earlier this week, Brown signed into law a bill that sets a goal of 100 percent clean electricity for California by 2045. Many in Thursday's group, though, were critical of Brown's efforts, calling them "false solutions and climate capitalism."

As they marched Thursday, many protesters drummed on plastic buckets covered with pictures of Trump's face. They were peaceful as they blocked off Mission Street near Third Street, flanked by dozens of police officers keeping an eye on the event.

San Francisco Chronicle staff writer Sarah Ravani contributed to this report.

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