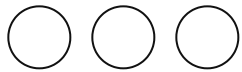


NEWS // HOUSTON

Donald Trump protesters in Houston march toward Super Bowl Live downtown

Keri Blakinger, Dylan Baddour, Houston Chronicle

Updated: Feb. 4, 2017 7:03 p.m.



Amid the bustling crowds of Super Bowl weekend, more than 300 cheering, chanting protesters flooded the streets of Houston Saturday, shouting in opposition to the administration of President Donald Trump.

Proudly hoisting signs comparing Vice President Mike Pence to a jar of mayonnaise and imploring passersby to "Resist Trump," the rambunctious crowd started at City Hall and made its way toward Minute Maid Park, stopping for a tense standoff with police before trekking back toward the Super Bowl Live event at Discovery Green.

The march in Houston comes amid a wave of similar protests nationwide, including in New York City and Washington D.C. on Saturday.

"We are coming together today to demonstrate against the divisive policies of Donald Trump," said Brian Harrison, a local lawyer and regular organizer with the Houston Socialist Alternative. "People are really concerned about Trump's policies and it's mobilizing and energizing people in a way I've never seen."

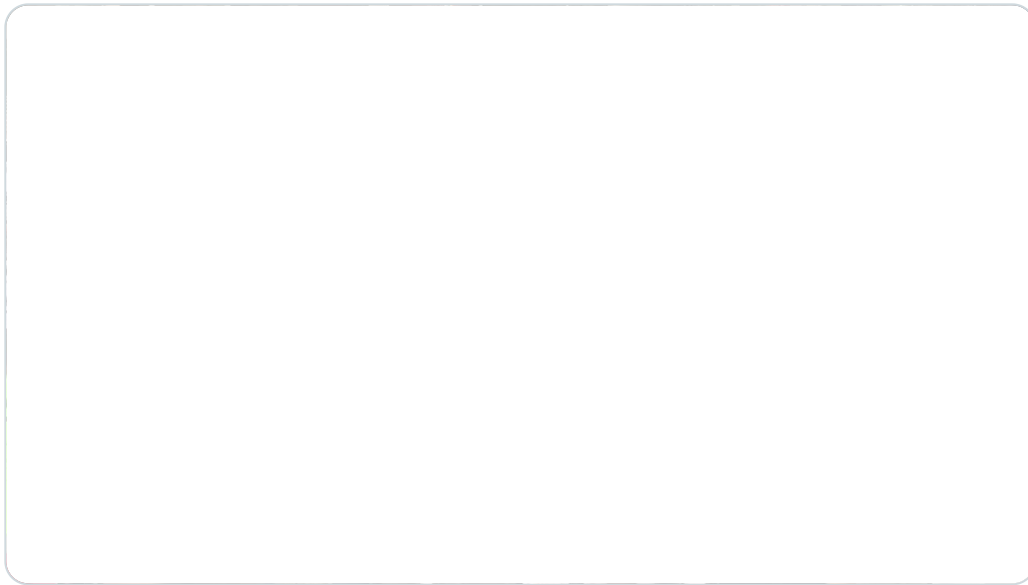


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Here's the protest march for [#SuperBowl](#) weekend in

Houston today



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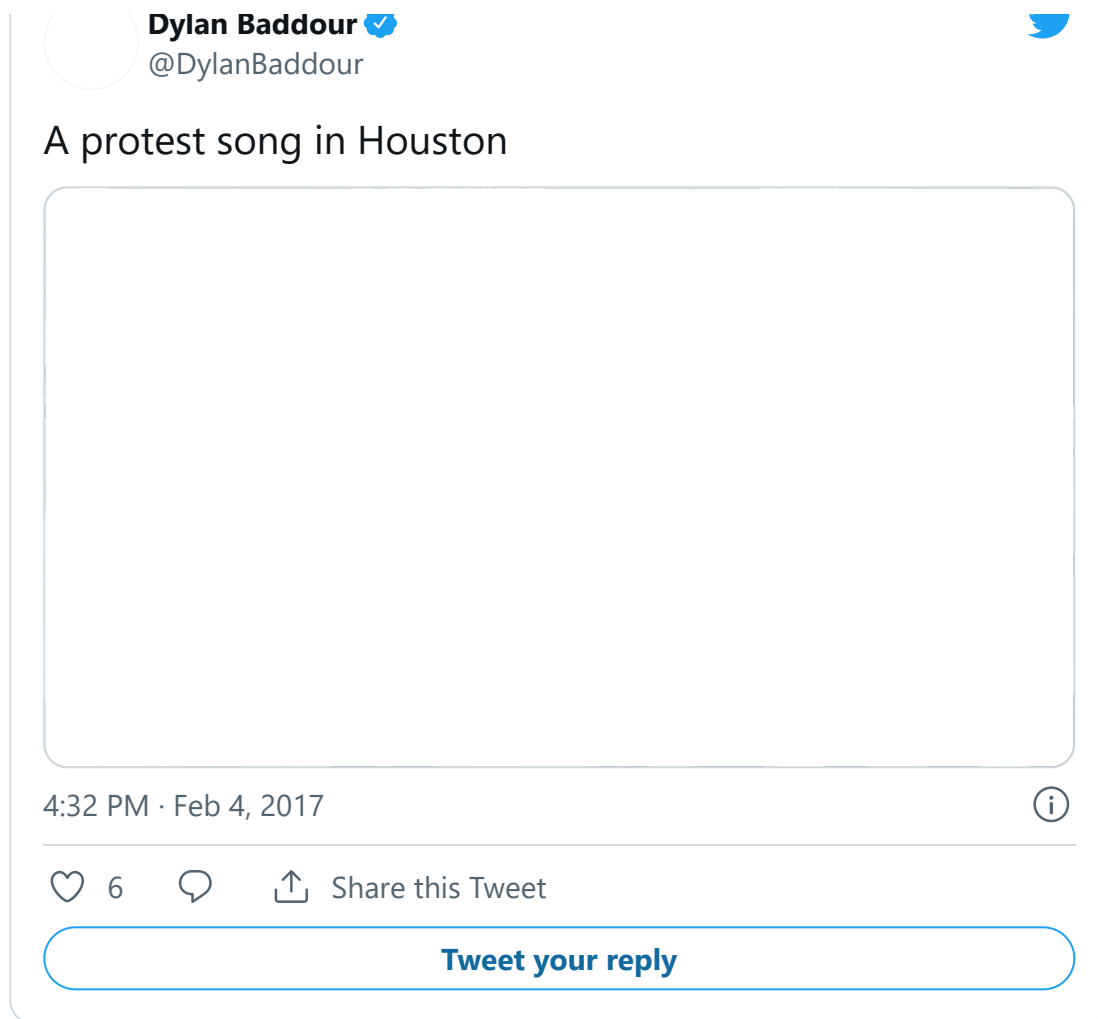
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The marchers passed by thick crowds gathered downtown for Super Bowl festivities, and onlookers met the marchers with a combination of cheers and jeers. Some raised fists in solidarity and others raised middle fingers, while demonstrators reveled in the attention.

"I feel like we have a lot of eyes on us because of the Super Bowl," said Melanie Villela, who last Saturday created the most widely shared Facebook event page for the protest. "It was too good of an opportunity to pass up."

Rozella White, another organizer, described the gathering as a coalescence of left-leaning groups that have gained mass in recent years, including Black Lives Matter, environmentalists, feminists and advocates of rights for immigrants, indigenous and LGBT people. She and others handed out a list of 13 local organizations that she said collaborated in assembling the march.





But many demonstrators, she said, weren't affiliated with any group and turned out based on the Facebook page. Saturday's protest follows two days of similar gatherings in Houston last weekend in response to a steady volley of White House executive orders.

The march began in close coordination with Houston police. One officer addressed the crowd as it grew, asking those gathered to "take care of members who get too emotional."

"You lose the message when you get too emotional," the officer told the crowd.

Although the event started off orderly and calm, by the time the mass neared Super Bowl crowds, dozens of officers worked to keep the protesters corralled and maintain free passage on sidewalks for the Super Bowl fans.



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Protesters have set up shop in the heart of #sb51 festivities in Houston



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Anti-Trump chants turned to "Mayor Turner, let us march" cries as police penned the crowd in the "Free Speech Zone" - a large, empty lot they shared with a group of anti-circumcision activists known as The Bloodstained Men.

Some protest leaders advocated for ignoring police and spilling out into the crowded streets, but eventually the demonstrators decided to head back up Rusk toward the Super Bowl Live events, where they chanted and shouted toward the sports-loving revelers across the street.

One little girl gleefully toted a "Trump eats farts" sign scrawled out at the start of the day's demonstrations.

Bob Klenk, 55, arrived in Houston Friday from Jacksonville, Fla. to catch the Super Bowl, and watched unhappily as the march passed through downtown, shouting his support for Trump.

"It's a waste of time. Trump is the president," Klenk said. "Move on. Right now they're disrupting America."

Saturday's action was just the latest in a busy week of protests, which has also included actions at the George Bush Intercontinental Airport, near the Galleria and at the Mexican consulate. For Sunday's big game, crowds are slated to gather at Hermann Park around noon before marching toward NRG Stadium where the Super Bowl will be played.



Written By
Keri Blakinger

Keri Blakinger covered breaking news, prisons and the death penalty. She was hired at the Houston Chronicle through the Hearst Fellows program. She graduated from Cornell University and covered county and town government at the Ithaca Times before moving to breaking news at the New York Daily News. After three years at the Chronicle, she moved to The Marshall Project.



Written By
Dylan Baddour

Reach Dylan on

Dylan Baddour is a business reporter for the Houston Chronicle.
