

Protesters rally against Ted Nugent performance in Montclair



Staff Photo by Adam Anik

Demonstrators congregate at the corner of Bloomfield Avenue and Seymour Street in protest of Ted Nugent's Tuesday evening performance at The Wellmont Theater.

Wellmont Theater

Controversial rocker Ted Nugent had a unique opening act prior to his Tuesday evening performance at The Wellmont Theater, as elected officials, local agencies and dozens of protesters stood at the corner of Bloomfield Avenue and Seymour Street in opposition to the performance.

Bluewave New Jersey President Marcia Marley told The Times that the protest had nothing to do with Nugent's politics and everything to do about incendiary and offensive comments Nugent has made during past performances. While respectful of Nugent's right to free speech and right to perform, Marley said that protesters were exercising their right to demonstrate.

"Silence is a form of condoning the behavior," Marley said. "I think it's every citizen's right and duty to speak up against intolerance and hate... Tolerance is not tolerating intolerance. It's speaking out against it."

Protesters crying out "Two, four, six, eight we say no to Nugent's Hate," "No hate in the Garden State," and "Shame on The Wellmont" were joined at the demonstration by groups such as BlueWave NJ, Working Families NJ and NJ Citizen Action as well as officials including District 34 Assemblyman Thomas Giblin, District 5 Freeholder Brendan Gill and Township Council members Renée Baskerville, Robert Russo and Sean Spiller. District 11 congressional candidate Mark Dunec was also present.

While unable to formally organize his group due to short notice and the need for national chapter approval, Montclair NAACP President Al Pelham told The Times prior to the protest that members were being encouraged to attend as individuals.

"The Wellmont has a right and people have a right to go," Pelham said. "But in this day and age, with all the hate in world, we don't need somebody coming in spewing vile comments about President Obama or Hillary Clinton. We don't really need hate at this point in time."

Gill, who is a Montclair resident, said that he was disappointed by the fact that Montclair was providing Nugent with a platform.

"Clearly, Ted Nugent's comments are over the top and totally inconsistent with the values of the Township of Montclair," Gill said.

Baskerville, Russo and Spiller all spoke at the protest and continued their support of demonstrators during the subsequent Township Council meeting with Spiller saying that the demonstration protested a hateful message while promoting Montclair's diversity and Baskerville stressing the event's motto of "no hate" and saying that she was happy so many people attended.

Russo disclosed that, after speaking with The Wellmont Theater's co-executive director Bruce Ciccone, he was assured that the performance was not management's decision and that a similar performance would never happen again.

Speaking with The Times, Ciccone said that The Wellmont's management's contract with its booking agent, Live Nation, is such that he has no input regarding acts and that management cannot cancel shows. In light of the controversy surrounding Nugent's performance, Ciccone said that management will be able to have discussions with Live Nation concerning acts that it feels inappropriate for the community in the future.

In an email to The Times, Sean Striegel, senior vice president of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania clubs and theatres for Live Nation stated that he believed Nugent had the right to perform.

"We're not censors," wrote Striegel.

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