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\$76,000 protest disrupts swank Obama SF fundraiser: "We paid our dues..where's our 'change'?" (VIDEO)

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Half a dozen protesters said they paid \$76,000 for tickets to a high-priced San Francisco fundraiser starring President Barack Obama Thursday to air their concerns regarding the treatment of Private Bradley Manning -- the 23-year-old intelligence expert accused of being the Wikileaks' source.

The protest occurred during a breakfast fundraiser at the swank St. Regis Hotel in San Francisco Thursday.


Oakland activist Naomi Pitcairn said she was a lead organizer of the event for the group which calls itself freshjuiceparty.com; she personally paid \$76,000 total for tickets for the group to gain entry to the Obama event, she told us.

As the local "pool" reporter for the fundraiser, we were there with Shaky Hand Productions to capture the unusual

"performance art" protest as it happened. Here's what it looked like -- catch the President looking on from the stage:

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We'll have a full report on SFGate and in the Chronicle shortly, but here's our raw White House "pool" report just filed:

The progressive group protested what they called the inhumane treatment of Pvt. Bradley Manning in the Wikileaks case. Their protest song - which included lyrics: "We paid our dues..where's our change?" - was sung in its entirety for Obama, who thanked them at the end of the a capella performance.

Outside, the group said that they were progressives who had worked for Obama and voted for him in 2008, but who were disappointed not only with Manning's treatment, but with Obama's policies on war as well.

The protest began when Pitcairn stood up about 5 minutes into the president's stump speech as said, "Mr. President, we wrong a song -- can we sing it for you?"

When he tried to suggest she wait, the group launched into the ditty, and kept singing for several minutes.

Pitcairn took off her outer shirt to reveal a tee shirt in support of Manning. Then, she stood up and announced she was leaving.

The president appeared a little set back by the lengthy song, but he thanked the group -- and complimented their voices at the close.

"Where was I?" he said then, launching back into his stump speech. Pitcairn was escorted out, but was not arrested or cited by San Francisco police.

Protesters including UC Santa Cruz art professor Elizabeth Stephens, songwriter Craig Casey, activist Jane Sullivan of Santa Cruz, writer Greg Archer, and David Schiller of Berkeley, as well as organizers from Tony's Circus, all Bay Area locals.

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Pitcairn said she was happy to pay the tickets for all of them to enter so they could personally address with president with their concerns.

Diners at the breakfast were assembled around tables of 10 in an upstairs dining room, with stage flanked by a backdrop of California and American flags.

Among the 200 guests at the sold out event: U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, California Attorney General Kamala Harris, Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom, former San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown, and Governor Jerry Brown (who left early and didn't attend the President's address.)

High end tickets to the Obama Victory Fund breakfast event started at \$5,000 and went up to \$35,800. That higher price ticket involves a split between the Organizing for America and the Democratic National Committee. Breakdown of tickets: \$5,000 of the cost goes to Organizing for America and represents the maximum legal donation to primary and general election presidential campaign; \$30,800 goes to DNC.

The DNC would not estimate total raised in the event.

Posted By: [Carla Marinucci](#) (Email, Twitter) | April 21 2011 at 11:36 AM

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