

CAUS denounces police murder of Aiyana Jones

Committee Against Utility Shutoffs (CAUS)
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The Committee Against Utility Shutoffs (CAUS) condemns the police murder of seven-year-old Aiyana Jones and demands that all those responsible for her death be held legally responsible.

Along with working people in Detroit and everywhere else that this tragic story has reached, we offer our deepest sympathy to Aiyana's family, teachers and friends. CAUS joins with them in their desire to fight against and expose this senseless and brutal killing.

The death of the second grader is the latest in a series of tragedies that have claimed the lives of small children and other innocent victims in Detroit. On March 2, a house fire on Bangor Street killed three youngsters, ages three to five. Just hours before, the children's mother, 31-year-old Sylvia Young, pleaded with DTE Energy not to shut off heat and electrical service in the freezing winter temperatures at the home where they were living.

CAUS was formed to unite working people throughout the Detroit metro area to demand that DTE Energy and top management be held accountable for those killed in fires related to utility shutoffs. We fight to ensure that lights, heat and electricity be guaranteed as basic human rights, instead of a source of profit for corporate executives and wealthy investors.

Now another small child has lost her life. This was not an accident as the police, state and local officials and the media claim. Before the raid, neighbors and relatives warned the police there were small children

inside the eastside home on Lillibridge where Aiyana was murdered. They ignored these warnings and launched a military-style raid on the home, using stun grenades and heavy weapons.

The whole thing was being filmed at the time for a crime television reality show. Under such conditions, it was virtually inevitable that innocent people would be killed or injured.

For the authorities in Detroit life is cheap when it comes to the working class. In the eyes of the rich and powerful, workers and young people are dispensable. DTE executives order utility shutoffs to hundreds of thousands of Detroit area households in the area, knowing full well what the tragic consequences will be. In the same fashion, Mayor Bing, a multimillionaire, says there is "no money" for schools and city services. He plans to shutdown whole neighborhoods deemed too poor to maintain. The Obama administration, which hands over trillions to Wall Street banks, is equally indifferent to the suffering of the country's working class.

In the days since Aiyana's murder, city officials and the media have defended the police department's law-and-order methods, claiming they exist to "protect" Detroit citizens from violent crime. *Detroit Free Press* columnist Rochelle Riley went so far as to try to implicate ordinary Detroiters in the young girl's death. Supposedly they are to blame for this tragedy and others like it because of their tendency towards "harboring criminals" in their homes and neighborhoods, refusing to cooperate with the police.

"Embracing a zero-tolerance attitude toward crime

will make it easier for police officers to do their jobs” and “make the city safer for children,” Riley wrote. She denounced those “demanding justice” for Aiyana, claiming they were “looking for someone to blame” instead of themselves.

This is utter hypocrisy. The source of crime is not evil children but the horrendous social conditions that plague the city and leave the vast majority of youth without any decent prospect for a future.

The political establishment has no answer to these problems. The real unemployment rate in Detroit has hit the Depression-era level of 50 percent. Young people in the city are growing up in homes without heat and electricity, forced to live in dilapidated houses or homeless shelters. The school system has been systematically dismantled by budget cuts and teacher layoffs.

Far from improving the situation, every measure taken by Mayor Bing and the corporate interests that stand behind has worsened the situation. Their policies continue to create more desperation and crime. The political establishment has no answers to Detroit’s social crisis except more police, more prisons and more brutality. At the same time, the real criminals—the corporate bosses and Wall Street speculators who have looted society—get away scot-free and are rewarded with trillions in public assets.

The mayor’s law-and-order campaign is not aimed at protecting ordinary citizens. Its purpose is to use the brute force of the police to intimidate and suppress popular opposition, which is growing and will inevitably explode against the ever-worsening conditions the population in Detroit faces.

In remarks last month at the funeral of a policeman killed in an earlier raid, Bing warned, “We collectively will bring this city back and make sure that those few who disrespect the leadership in this city, the officers in this city, [know] that we’re not going to stand by and take this anymore, the madness has to stop.”

In Detroit and elsewhere, politicians use crime as a pretext to build up the repressive powers of the state.

Last month, two Democratic state legislators in Chicago called for the dispatch of national guard troops into city neighborhoods, allegedly to fight crime. In comments to the press, however, representatives compared the city neighborhoods to Iraq and Afghanistan. They said troops were needed to put down potential “civil unrest.”

It is time that the working class stands up to stop this madness. The fight by CAUS to end utility shutoffs is part of a struggle to unite the working class—black, white and immigrant—against the profit system, and reorganize economic and political life to meet the needs of the vast majority of the population, not the wealthy few. We urge you to join CAUS and take up this fight.



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