

Over a dozen to be charged in LA protests over police killing

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Los Angeles officials announced Monday that they would prosecute more than a dozen protesters arrested during four nights of demonstrations over the death of Manuel Jamines, the 37-year-old immigrant day laborer that was shot by police on September 5.

According to the *Los Angeles Times*, police are looking through videotapes for evidence of misconduct during the protests. One individual has already been charged with using a slingshot to “hurl semi-round projectiles” at two LAPD officers.

While the individual in question is not a member of any left wing or socialist group, the *Times* article said that the police are specifically interested in acts committed by so-called agitators, “who officials said fueled violence” during the protests.

The accusation that “outside agitators” were responsible for the angry response of immigrant workers against police killing of Jamines was first raised by the LLPPL, the union that represents LAPD officers, and is being echoed by the bourgeois media.

The attempt is to delegitimize the protests, while targeting those protesting the real crime—the killing of Jamines. Several eyewitnesses say that Jamines was unarmed, or that he was inebriated and did not pose a threat to the police. (See, “Police killing of immigrant worker sparks protests in Los Angeles”)

The political establishment in LA has jumped to the defense of the police officers, including one who has a history of using excessive force. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa has called the police “heroes.”

From the population, the killing has provoked widespread outrage, coming on top of decades of police brutality in the Pico-Union and Westlake areas of Los Angeles. The shooting sparked four days of mourning and protests by immigrant youth and immigrant workers, including fellow day workers. Outrage over

the killing has intersected with growing anger over the destruction of jobs and the growth of homelessness and hunger in the area.

The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to several residents at McArthur Park, which is on the Western border of the Pico-Union district, where the killing occurred. Their testimony presents a stark picture of the conditions that confront immigrants in Los Angeles.

María is self-employed. She takes care of children. “I have lived in Los Angeles for about 7 years,” she said. “Before that I lived in Bayonne, New Jersey, but I could not stand the cold during the winter and heat during the summer, so I went back to my country. Meanwhile my son and daughter had come to Los Angeles. Seven years ago I returned, to Los Angeles this time, where the weather is closer to what it is in Guatemala.”

“Things have changed a lot,” María said. “For immigrants in this neighborhood life has always been hard, even when things were going well for everyone else. Most of the people worked in the garment factories. Now there is no work. One sees many people in the park, because they have nothing else to do. This also affects my business. When people are out of work, they take care of their own children and don’t call on me. It is also much more dangerous to live here now. People are robbed and killed. There are drugs everywhere.”

Speaking on the conditions of her family, she added, “In my home there are six of us in a one-bedroom apartment. My daughter, son-in-law, and two children live in one room; my other son and I live in the other. For that we pay \$700 rent, only because they have been there 15 years. People that just move in have to pay more. The building managers also count how many

people live in each apartment. At one time we had two cousins move in, and the rent went up to \$800, \$50 more for each person.

“Right now, both my sons have jobs. My daughter is going to school to improve her English. Our living arrangements are all right compared to what other people go through, except that there are mice in the apartment, and the landlord does not bother doing anything about it.”

“In short, we are all in a bad way,” María concluded.

Rolando first arrived in San Diego, California, from El Salvador 34 years ago. He has lived in the Pico-Union area for about 22 years. He is unemployed, and has run out of benefits.

“I remember going to the supermarket and buying a cartful of groceries for about \$25,” Rolando said. “Today it would cost \$275. People are forced to shoplift milk, tortillas, to feed their families.”

Rolando said he had once had a middle class job as a carpenter, but lost it about five years ago. “I am in the class of poor people,” he said.

“There are three of us in our home. Only my wife works. My daughter is a student at Los Angeles Community College, and right now we are trying to put some money together to buy the last of her books. Sometimes I see her go to school with no money, except for bus fare. It breaks my heart. Sometimes my wife and I go without food. We fight; there is more tension in our home.”

Rolando spoke with bitterness of Obama and the Democratic Party. “I don’t think that things will get better until after Obama goes out of office,” he said. “Did you know that no American president has deported more people than Obama? He holds the record.”

Reynaldo, 28, arrived from Honduras five years ago. For a year, a construction contractor kept him under slave-like conditions. He was given advice by a police officer that he could take his employer to court for back wages and eventually got \$4000, one-fourth of what he believes he is owed. The suit is still in progress and he waits every day for a letter from the Labor Department, hoping that he will get the rest of his money.

Reynaldo was acquainted with Manuel Jamines. Like Jamines, Reynaldo is a day-worker. Currently

Reynaldo is homeless.

“I was hoping to find work in the US, so that I could send money to my daughters back home,” he said. “Anything really. In Honduras, I was a bricklayer. I have done that here also. For a while I was hired to distribute flyers door to door. I also unload semi trailers.”

“When you are a day-worker,” he said, “sometimes they pay \$50, sometimes \$40. Unloading a truck pays \$15 or \$20, for about 4 hours of work. Distributing flyers pays \$35 per day.”

“Me and my friends, who are also day-workers, sleep in the streets in Skid Row,” Reynaldo said. “We used to sleep in this park but it has gotten too dangerous. We try to pick a spot across from the police station. In the morning I walk to the Los Angeles Mission on 5th Street. I shower, put on clean clothes and show up at Home Depot. Lately there has been very little work.”

Asked if Jamines was also homeless, Reynaldo said he knew Jamines only slightly, but added, “There is so little work lately that those day laborers who are not homeless now, will probably be homeless soon. Alcoholism has a terrible effect on many people, not just Jamines.”



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