

Massive police deployment against Anaheim, California protests

Our reporters
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Police in Anaheim, California deployed huge numbers of officers in military fashion over the weekend, in response to several hundred protesters demonstrating against a recent police killing. Nine people were arrested.

The protest Sunday was part of ongoing demonstrations against the killing of Manuel Diaz, a 25-year-old unarmed man who was shot and killed by Anaheim police over a week ago. The shooting of Diaz was followed by the use of rubber bullets and tear gas against peaceful demonstrators.

A day after Diaz's death, police shot and killed Joel Acevedo, a 21-year-old youth. On Friday, police were involved in another shooting, this time non-fatal, that involved a suspected burglary.

On Sunday, the police response included horse-mounted officers clad in riot gear, paramilitary troopers stationed atop the police department and other buildings, and truckloads of troops dressed in Army fatigues lining the perimeter of the demonstration. When demonstrators took to an impromptu march toward Disneyland, hundreds of security forces were deployed to head it off.

After the demonstration was declared to be an "unlawful assembly," protesters were asked to disperse. Riot police with zip ties and an empty police bus awaited any demonstrators who refused to follow these orders.

Last Tuesday, at a City Hall meeting, hundreds of demonstrators were attacked by police who fired rubber bullets at the crowd and arrested 24 protestors, including four juveniles.

The recent shootings have exposed the real state of relations in Southern California. In the shadow of Disneyland, masses of people have to contend with an increasingly dire economic situation and a repressive

police force.

Sunday's demonstration and other protests have been supported by organizations seeking to promote identity politics in response to the shooting, insisting that the fundamental issue is race, not social inequality. Among these groups is BAMN (By Any Means Necessary). In the leaflets they distributed they demanded an end to the "new Jim Crow" and the establishment of a "new mass, integrated, independent, youth-led Civil Rights movement."

Supporters of the Socialist Equality Party distributed copies of a recent statement from presidential candidate Jerry White, "Police violence in Anaheim: The class issues." The WSWs spoke to some of the protesters, as well as Anaheim resident.

Nicole, a student living in Orange County, said, "I'm here today to support the protesters. My cousin was actually a friend of one of the two guys who was murdered. I also want to sympathize with others who have been murdered by police. We're all scared, because we know this can happen to any of us."

Jerry works odd jobs in the Buena Park area of Orange County. "I myself am a victim of police brutality and have lived in Northern Orange County my whole life," he said. "I'm here to make people aware of what's really going on around here in terms of police brutality.

"What's happening in Anaheim isn't limited to Anaheim. Just a little while ago, you had the attack on Kelly Thomas nearby in Fullerton, and now their have been six killings in Anaheim this year alone.

"I consider many of the police department members here like a gang. There is no code, no oversight. They just commit crimes indiscriminately. The idea that this is all part of a crackdown on gangs is ridiculous. The police are the gangs."

Freddy is a long time Orange County resident working in the area. He spoke against the perspective being advanced by the protest organizers saying, “I’m here to support the protests. The thing is though that this doesn’t have anything to do with race. We need to recognize that, because the problem of police killing is only getting worse, and if we say that this is only a matter of race then we’re not really understanding the problem.”

“This is happening to white kids, black kids, brown kids. It’s happening all across the board. Look at Kelly Thomas,” who was white.

“There is essentially a culture within the police department which allows these things to go unpunished. At worst, a police officer who kills an innocent kid can be demoted to desk duty.”

Freddy added, “As far as the idea that this represents a crackdown against gangs. I’m not in favor of gangs. However, do you mean to tell me that because someone’s part of a gang, they deserve to be shot in the back and murdered? Or that because someone runs from the cops, they deserve whatever they get? I would think the given what the police have done, the only logical course of action would actually *be* to run from the cops.”

While waiting for local transit, high school student Eduardo Sanchez viewed the gathering crowd on Sunday. He commented on the relationship between the domestic state killings and the wars and drone bombings committed overseas, stating that “it’s practically the same thing.”

Mark, another citizen of Anaheim, voiced his support for the protest and sought to place the incident that ignited this spark in their historical context. “They are a part of the times. There is a marriage between Disneyland and the city of Anaheim. It’s no question that the police are enforcing the will of the city, which is the will of this corporate power. This all comes from an obsession with security though. While there are no jobs and wages are low, dealing with pockets of crime in a lethal manner is deemed ‘cost efficient.’”

Jackie, a student of University of California, San Diego, grew up in Anaheim. “When you see this happening in other countries, it doesn’t affect you as

much. But when it happens to someone in your own neighborhood, where your parents grew up, it becomes so real.”

Jackie sought to tie the murders to an inherent racism existing within the system. SEP supporters responded by arguing that the fundamental issue involved was class, not race. Julio, who was sitting with Jackie, also noted the murder of the white homeless man Thomas and stated that police brutality cut across racial dimensions. He also noted the futility of “putting people of color into positions of power. It’s a dead-end.”

Megan, who was sitting with Jackie and Julio, said, “Anaheim is a microcosm of what’s going on around the world.” In tying the question of increased repression with the enforced destitution spearheaded by the banks and carried through by the government, Megan remarked, “My dad says it best: the banks are the American gangsters.”



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