

Thousands gather in St. Louis for Michael Brown's funeral

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Several thousand people turned out Monday in St. Louis, Missouri to attend the funeral of Michael Brown, the 18-year-old youth who was killed by a police officer in the suburb of Ferguson on August 9.

The attendance was a reflection of the widespread popular outrage over the police murder of Brown and the crackdown on protests that erupted over the killing. Brown's death sparked two weeks of demonstrations that were violently repressed by a militarized police force armed with assault weapons and armored vehicles, and using flash-bang grenades, tear gas, and rubber bullets.

The governor of Missouri declared a "state of emergency" and called out the National Guard, placing Ferguson under police rule.

As hundreds of Brown's family members, politicians, dignitaries, and others attended the service inside the Friendly Temple Missionary Baptist Church, thousands of workers from St. Louis and throughout the country gathered outside. Hundreds of people watched a live broadcast of the service in an overflow area across from the church that was open to the public.

A group of several hundred motorcycle club members gathered to ride at the head of the funeral procession.

University students throughout the country participated in protests during Brown's funeral to express their opposition to his killing. Campuses that were reported to have participated in the #HandsUpWalkOut protest include George Mason University, Syracuse University, Antioch College, Sewanee, the University of Kansas and Washington University in St. Louis, where approximately 500 students gathered on the campus quad.

The concluding eulogy was delivered by Democratic Party politician Al Sharpton, who has functioned as a liaison with the Obama administration in attempting to contain opposition and bolster the credibility of the state and the police. Sharpton has led the efforts to obscure the class issues involved in Brown's killing and the state's

response through the promotion of racial politics.

Sharpton used his remarks to deliver an apologia for the police while reprimanding black workers and the citizens of Ferguson who turned out to protest in the aftermath of Brown's killing. He also called for the demonstrators to support the Obama administration's fraudulent review of national policing guidelines and urged a "fair, impartial" investigation into Brown's death.

"We are not anti-police, we respect police," Sharpton said. The epidemic of police killings in the United States, Sharpton declared, was simply the result of "a few bad apples" that should be thrown out. He concluded that, except for a few embarrassing blemishes here and there, America's police forces have been doing a good job.

Almost identical remarks were delivered by Sharpton at a demonstration over the weekend to denounce the killing of Eric Garner by the New York Police Department. Sharpton insisted that the march was not "against the police," but only for the removal of "bad apples."

In Ferguson, Sharpton blamed working class blacks for the consequences of high rates of poverty and unemployment. Chastising the residents of Ferguson for "throwing a fit" by protesting and having so-called "ghetto pity parties" in response to police violence.

Espousing the old canard of self-help, Sharpton called on African-Americans to "clean up our community" before addressing issues that cross racial lines. One of his central demands has been for the hiring of more black police officers.

World Socialist Web Site reporters spoke to workers who gathered outside the church to express their opposition to Brown's killing and the militarized police response to protests in Ferguson.

Barbara Cole attended the funeral out of support for the Brown family because her son, Joseph Cole, had been killed by the Ferguson police in 2000. Police claim that Cole had fired a gun at them, but the autopsy did not show

gun powder residue on his hands. “This is a rehash of what happened with my son, except this time it is getting the attention it deserves,” Cole said.

Shanjiwah, a nursing assistant from St. Louis, also came to support the Brown family and oppose the police response to protests. “I’m here because I need to be here. We are all family. What’s going on in our community is terrible. It needs to stop. If you bring out a bunch of cops in military outfits with military equipment you are going to get a response. Its opening people’s eyes. I pray to God we get some justice, because if we don’t it’s going to get worse.”

Shinita came out to express support for the Brown family. King’s daughter Kiera Tanter was killed in a 2012 killing, in a case that remains unsolved. She expressed anger at the limited police investigation. “My baby got killed at 16, and I still haven’t gotten any justice. I know how hard it is for [Brown’s] mother, she’s going to miss all of the little things he used to do. It’s going to get worse for her when his birthday comes around.”

Jeremey Rohne who worked volunteer security outside the funeral voiced his opposition to the militarization of the police as well as Sharpton’s speaking at the funeral. “Our taxes pay for the police, and they have to have some respect for us. The militarization of the police is overkill. They spend all that money rather than helping the people.” He continued, “I’m not with Sharpton. I heard it was \$60,000 for Sharpton to come here and speak.”

Eli, a veteran of the First Gulf War who served in the Navy from 1983 to 1994, spoke out about the militarized response of police to the Ferguson protests. “I was surprised by that. It was too much escalation. That’s stuff we used over in Iraq. It was uncalled for. I was in L.A. during the Rodney King riots and they didn’t use the heavy equipment like in Ferguson.”



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