

“The cops don’t respect anyone”

Attendees at Michael Brown’s funeral denounce inequality, police repression

Our reporters
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Reporters from the *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to workers in St. Louis and Ferguson, Missouri during and following the funeral service for Michael Brown, the 18-year-old youth shot by police on August 9. The service, held on Monday, was attended by several thousand people from throughout the region.

Reginald, a worker and military veteran from St. Louis said, “I think the killing of Michael Brown was tragic. I’m here to show my support and love for the family. He was shot multiple times. That was uncalled for! Why use deadly force immediately? Shoot him in the leg if need be.

“The cops don’t treat you like a citizen. They don’t respect anyone.”

Asked of about the class character of Brown’s murder, Reginald responded, “If you are rich, you won’t be in that sort of situation.”

Reginald addressed the militarized response to protests in Ferguson, “The government always has a secret agenda. They know they can’t control everything, so they brought the National Guard into Ferguson to intimidate everyone. They know exactly what they are doing. They are trying to hold us back. We can change a lot if we stand up and make our voices heard.”

Nick, a minimum wage worker from St. Louis attended, said, “I came here to show my support for the entire community, because I don’t believe it is a racial thing either. I also believe that a lot of Americans suffer from poverty, and racism is just a mask to cover that up. It’s a distraction.

“This is 2014; we are all human beings and we should be able to accept each other no matter what

color you are, where you come from, what clothes you wear or how you talk. We are all people. We all deserve to be treated fairly.

“Concerning Michael Brown, I feel that it was murder. I don’t think it was justifiable at all. When a man gets shot in the face two times that needs to be considered murder. If it were anyone else it would be considered murder.

“We can’t sit here and keep people in poverty. We need to come together as a community and accept the fact that we need to create more jobs. We need to make sure that children are being fed, that people live in houses. There is no reason for any of us to live in these conditions.”

Asked about President Obama and whether his policies have resulted in the creation of jobs Nick said, “I don’t feel there have been any jobs created, to be honest with you. My girlfriend and I work minimum wage jobs. That makes it hard to take care of a family of four. There is no way to do it unless you have two jobs.

“I think my kids should know what is going on, especially when big corporations are supporting the politicians. They don’t care for the people. They care for the people who put money in their pockets. That’s really what it comes down to. They don’t represent the community; they represent the people who back them.”

Nick said he did not agree with Governor Jay Nixon, a Democrat, calling out the state police and National Guard, or with the Obama administration.

“This isn’t the only place to experience poverty,” he added. “You have Chicago, New Orleans, Los Angeles, New York City, Detroit, Lansing. It’s insane how many people suffer from poverty, how many people

live in terrible conditions.”

Bernard Brown, a power station control operator, traveled to St. Louis from Sparta, Illinois to attend the funeral of Michael Brown and to ride at the head of the funeral procession, along with other motorcycle club members.

“We came here with a lot of people to express our opposition to the police murder of Michael Brown. The question we raised is, Why do they need to use lethal force when life is so precious?”

“The way they are doing things is not right. All of us want justice. We are here for the family. This could be my family. This could be me.

“There is a devaluation of life. If we keep going in this direction there are going to be a lot of problems.”

Melvin Jones, a resident of Ferguson, was at a memorial for Michael Brown set up in the middle of the street where he was killed. Melvin expressed his outrage at the release of surveillance footage showing an alleged petty theft by Brown, aimed at smearing the youth. He also pointed out that the murder of Brown was part of a spate of murders and other abuses by police in black communities in the St. Louis area.

Melvin spoke in opposition to the presence of Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson in Ferguson. Sharpton delivered the main eulogy at the funeral of Brown. “Both Sharpton and Jackson got booed when they were here. Jackson was caught on video, Sharpton wasn’t, but both of them were booed.

“Jackson is a multi-millionaire, and Sharpton is a multi-millionaire. In a video, someone asked him if he was going to get some of the brothers out of jail,” he said, referring to the arrest of the person who videotaped the police killing of Eric Garner in New York. “Back during the Civil Rights days, someone with money would help get the leaders out of jail, so they were asked if they would do the same.”

Discussing the militarization of police, Melvin said, “I have never known the Republicans to back down from militarizing anything, and I have never seen the Democrats take anything from the Republicans. Everything the Republicans ask for the Democrats give them.

“Just like Clinton passed NAFTA. Clinton said, ‘There is no problem, I’m going to pass it without asking the people.’ And then Clinton passed welfare reform.”

Shanjiwah, a nursing assistant from St. Louis, stood outside the church for several hours in one hundred degree heat to show her support for 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. It’s opening people’s eyes. I pray to God we get some justice, because if we don’t it’s going to get worse.

“They don’t like us all being together, but I’m here to support the movement that’s come out after Michael Brown’s death.”

Speaking about job prospects in St. Louis she said, “Lucky for me I’ve got my nurses certification so it isn’t so hard to find a job, but things are hard for my boyfriend who can’t find a job. They’re moving all of the jobs out of the city.”



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