

Brooklyn residents outraged at police killing of Akai Gurley

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In the aftermath of the New York City police shooting last week of Akai Gurley, a 28-year-old unarmed African American man in the Louis Pink public housing projects of Brooklyn, the city political establishment has done everything it can to quell a growing sense of injustice and outrage, particularly among the poorest sections of the working class, over police violence in New York City.

New York City Police Department (NYPD) rookie cop Peter Liang shot Gurley as he was descending a darkened staircase with his girlfriend because the elevator had not arrived. Neither Liang nor his partner identified themselves as police officers. The NYPD has alleged that Liang's weapon accidentally discharged.

There is a real possibility that in New York, as in many other cities and towns in the United States, anger, accumulated over years at a whole range of social conditions, may boil over into mass protest at the slightest provocation.

In New York, the most socially unequal of large American cities, the choking death of Eric Garner on July 17 by an NYPD officer, vividly displayed on video footage, has been burned into the memories of hundreds of thousands of people, while a widespread belief that Ferguson, Missouri, police officer Darren Wilson would not be indicted for the murder of Michael Brown on August 9 was confirmed Monday night.

It is under these circumstances that the city Medical Examiner's office moved quickly yesterday to declare that the shooting of Gurley was a homicide, meaning that Officer Liang can now be charged with a crime.

City Council members met today with Brooklyn District Attorney Kenneth Thompson to urge him to press charges against Liang. Two members of Congress met with Thompson yesterday. Thompson has called

the shooting "deeply troubling."

Police Commissioner Bill Bratton, one of the advocates of the "broken windows" theory of policing that led to the NYPD's policy of vertical stairway patrols that Liang and his partner were engaged in when Gurley was shot, has called the shooting, "a very unfortunate tragedy," and said that "The deceased is totally innocent."

Democratic mayor Bill de Blasio has made a point of denying that the killing of Gurley bears any resemblance to the murder of Garner or Brown: "Each incident is different, each of them has their own dynamic."

Two rallies have been held to protest the killing of Gurley, one sponsored by the Reverend Al Sharpton and his National Action Network in Harlem on Friday and another on Saturday in the Pink Houses.

Residents of the Pink Houses expressed their dismay and anger at the shooting to *World Socialist Web Site* reporters on Monday. The shooting of Gurley comes after years of harassment of the 4,000 people who live there by the NYPD.

Jose Alvarez told us, "When [the cops] do the roll call, I don't know what they're telling them, but when they get here, they don't want to talk to anyone. They come here with a nasty attitude. When they get here their mind is all already is made up."

Another resident, Mike, said, "As far as [police] protection, I don't see it. I believe that the people are being harassed for no reason. If you see two guys in front of a store, that doesn't mean you're suspicious. Right now, you can't stand with your friends in front of the building because you're trespassing. You can't sit on the bench because the park closes at dusk. You can't stand on the avenue because you look suspicious. If you're just coming out to get some air, it's a

problem.”

In relation to the murder of Michael Brown, Mike said, “It’s open and shut. It was like the murder of Eric Garner last July. We all saw what happened. Somebody has to say ‘enough is enough.’ But if you’re not a person with status, you’re not going to be heard.

“It should be the people that rule America, but it’s ruled by those with high status. No matter what we do or what we say, it doesn’t count.”

Jordan, a porter in New York, said, “There is no justification for Gurley’s death. The police are way out of line. Am I supposed to call the police just to say ‘I am going down the stairs don’t shoot me?’

“[Mayor] Bill de Blasio chose the wrong commissioner [Bill Bratton]. If you or me stepped in crap we would wipe it off, but politicians just sink deeper into it. Since de Blasio chose the commissioner, he is defending what he does.”

A woman who joined the conversation added, “Life in America is hell now. You can’t get a job and you can’t even walk around and mind your business without getting shot. All the man was trying to do was leave the building. He got gunned down for nothing. They’ll try to sweep it under the rug. It just happened with Garner. They choked him to death. It will happen in Ferguson.”



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