

Protests erupt over decision not to indict cop who killed Eric Garner

A WSWWS reporting team
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Demonstrations against police violence escalated for a second day Thursday, as thousands took to the streets, outraged that the state will not bring any charges against Daniel Pantaleo, the New York City police officer who was videotaped violently choking Staten Islander Eric Garner to death.

The largest demonstrations were held in New York City, where an angry and diverse crowd of thousands filled public squares, marched through streets and crossed bridges. Police arrested dozens, as demonstrations continued late into the evening.

More than 200 protesters were arrested on Thursday night, following more than 80 arrests the night before. In Times Square on Thursday, police used ambulances to stop the flow of demonstrations, disperse and “kettle” protesters, then carry out mass arrests.

Protesters also marched in Chicago, Boston, Baltimore, Washington D.C., St. Louis, Dallas and other major cities and at college campuses.

Chants of “I can’t breathe” (Eric Garner’s last words) and “Hands up, don’t shoot” (referencing the police killing of Mike Brown in Ferguson, Missouri) echoed throughout the night.

“I have lived in New York a long time, and I am disappointed but not surprised,” Michelle Holland told the *World Socialist Web Site*. “There have been so many instances of unarmed black men being killed by the police, and the police are not punished. It is like as soon as a cop says that he felt threatened, [the charges are] thrown out.”

Despite New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio’s efforts to differentiate the response of the NYPD to that of Ferguson police—he pledged to grant the protesters “space” to demonstrate—the police presence was overwhelming and their tactics at times highly provocative.

The NYPD, which last week sent detectives to Ferguson, mobilized hundreds if not thousands of police officers for the demonstrations. They came prepared with armored vehicles, LRAD sound weapons, tactical SWAT vans and paddy wagons for mass arrests.

Hilary, a native of Brooklyn, said: “The failure to indict was quite wrong. It shows that cops can do anything they want and get away with it. This should be looked into seriously. One thing I want to say is that, white or black, this is an injustice. There are white kids being killed by police. There was a [white] 17-year-old in Georgia who was killed by a cop.

“This has to stop. They are trying to make the police in this country into a military force. You’re giving them machine guns and all kinds of ammunition. I am very surprised that you need a permit to go out and protest. Every few years our rights as citizens of the country diminish. It makes me quite mad, and I want America to wake up. The police forces are going to take over. They have to protect the moneymakers of this system, this capitalism that we live in.

“Things need to change. We need to revamp the government. A great example of what should happen would be the French Revolution, where the people took power into their hands. I am from a working-class family and I believe that the working class needs this very much.”

Sarah added, “I have a lot of anger. There’s not going to be justice until this stops happening. I think it’s important that people out here are inspired to change things. The ability to imagine that things can be different is very radical.”

Joanne said, “If you can’t get indicted for killing someone on camera then something is wrong with the system. If the cops are supposed to be protecting people

and they're not being held accountable, then we need to change the system. I don't know the best way to do that. The politicians are defiantly protecting police. They are a part of the system."

Michelle, a recent graduate of Williams College participating in demonstrations in New York, told the WSWS, "I came out tonight because I care about my brothers and their ability to walk around unharmed. The failure to indict was heartbreaking, but also very telling of the kind of justice system that we are working with.

"I think it's time to reevaluate and potentially overthrow the system and start from scratch. I don't know what that would look like. But I don't know how we move forward from [police violence], because I think that we've hit a breaking point. It's clear there are many interconnected broken systems that are feeding into the Eric Garners and the Trayvon Martins and the Michael Browns."

Meanwhile, the operation by the Democratic Party to contain popular outrage pressed forward Thursday. Mayor de Blasio appeared with New York City Police Commissioner Bill Bratton at a press conference, proclaiming that, "the way we go about policing has to change." Rhetoric notwithstanding, de Blasio offered next to nothing in terms of concrete actions: a three day mandatory "retraining" course for all officers on top of a pilot program announced yesterday to outfit 90 patrolmen with video cameras.

Officials in New York are coordinating the response closely with the Obama administration, which announced shortly after the grand jury decision that the Justice Department will proceed with a Federal civil rights investigation. A similar investigation into the police killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson is not expected to result in any charges, according to officials interviewed by the *Washington Post*.

Earlier this week, the Obama administration gave its full backing to the continue militarization of police forces throughout the country.



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