

Brooklyn workers and young people condemn police violence

A WSWWS reporting team
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The protests against police violence that erupted in New York City after the December 3 announcement that a Richmond County grand jury refused to indict New York City Police Department (NYPD) officer Daniel Pantaleo for the killing of Eric Garner have now entered their third week.

The failure of the grand jury to indict Pantaleo, despite video footage showing the officer strangling Garner, has stoked outrage and a sense of deep injustice throughout the city.

Some 200 demonstrators protested Saturday outside a memorial service for Akai Gurley held in Brooklyn. The 28 year old Gurley was shot by NYPD officer Peter Liang on November 20 near Brooklyn's Pink Houses.

Immediately after shooting Gurley, and before calling for medical support, Liang contacted his representative from the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association, according to the *Daily News*.

A grand jury will be convened to determine if criminal charges should be pressed against Liang, Kings County (Brooklyn) District Attorney Kenneth Thompson announced Friday.

Gurley's mother and aunt have denounced proposals for Democratic Party-aligned celebrity Baptist minister Al Sharpton to give a eulogy for the slain 28-year-old.

"Al Sharpton came in, put his name on the situation, but has not even made one single call to the parents of Akai," said Hertenceia Peterson, Gurley's aunt.

Sharpton is after "money and political gain" and is "turning the tragedy into a circus," Peterson said.

Protests against police violence took place over the weekend in New York throughout the city, including Union Square, Grand Central Station and Times Square, among other places. On Monday, a group of protesters sought to disrupt the attendance of British

Prince William and his wife, Kate Middleton, Duchess of Cambridge, at a Brooklyn Nets game at the Barclays Center in Brooklyn.

The protests against the failure to indict the killer of Eric Garner, and now the shooting of Akai Gurley, are only the most visible manifestation of a deep and seething discontent among millions of working class and younger people in New York. Not only the police killings by the widely despised NYPD, but the social conditions of low wages, poor access to health care, and mass unemployment have created socially explosive conditions in the city.

On Sunday, *World Socialist Web Site* reporters spoke to dozens of residents of Brooklyn's East Flatbush neighborhood about police violence, the protests, and conditions of life.

One worker, originally from Haiti, told us, "We have come too far to go back now. We have to stop these shootings. The justice system is supposed to check them but it's gone too far now. The cost of living is so high. It has to be managed so that everyone can get work. If people get hungry in America, there will be a war."

Carl Stanislaus, a delivery truck driver said, "It is not right. It is not fair. I believe there is wrong and right, and there are different ways of doing things than using a gun. You can be driving down the street now; they stop you and start out treating you like a criminal. It could be because you are black. But it isn't just black; it is Hispanic and white as well. The police are totally above the law.

"What are we supposed to do now? Today, when I get home from work, I stay inside. I don't go out unless I have to. Last year, police were on a street where some people were drinking when I came to make a delivery. They charged me with drinking as I was coming back

from my delivery. If I didn't use self-control this situation may have gotten out of hand, like with Eric Garner, because of their attitude.

“De Blasio appointed Bratton, and Bratton was appointed first by Giuliani. Bratton began aggressive policing. I don't see any change since de Blasio replaced Bloomberg. If anything the policing is more aggressive.”

Pam, a worker at the New York City Parks Department, said about the recent wave of police killings: “It is becoming too common. I understand why there are protests; people are outraged over what is going on.

“People are becoming more afraid of the police than they are of the criminals. Why would someone call the police, when you don't know what they are going to do? People are thinking that they might die or get shot if they call the police.”

Andrew, an unemployed electrician said, “We don't get any real justice. The justice system is not working for the poorer class. You can see this clearly. My belief is that the rich want to be richer, and when you have the rich you have poor. The police don't come to our neighborhood and know what's going on. They don't know what people are facing.”

A young worker, Decorious Shepard, told us, “I feel it's an injustice because people shouldn't be allowed to kill other people and get away with it. You have the right to a fair trial and not being shot on sight.

“I moved to New York two years ago from Houston and it took me a year to get a job in retail. There are a lot of people looking for a job and it's not easy to get one. For me right now, coming from the South to New York, I'm paying \$650 for rent and back home that would get me a whole apartment. One person can't even work one job and maintain an okay living situation. It's not possible.”



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