

New York City protest fills streets of Manhattan

A WSWWS reporting team
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Tens of thousands of demonstrators filled the streets of New York City Saturday afternoon in what was the largest protest yet since anger first erupted over the grand jury acquittals of the police officers who killed Eric Garner and Michael Brown.

A largely young, multiracial crowd of working and middle class New Yorkers filled the broad avenues of Manhattan in a march that stretched up to a mile and a half long at its peak. It was led by family members of people killed by police, including Iris Baez, whose son Anthony was choked to death in 1994 by police after an errant football throw hit a squad car, and Constance Malcolm, whose son Ramarley Graham was shot by police in the bathroom of their Bronx apartment in 2012.

The protests in New York City were part of protests throughout the country over the weekend, including in Washington, DC, Massachusetts and California. Protest organizers in New York sought to channel the demonstration largely along the lines of racial politics, while the DC protest was organized by Democratic Party politician Al Sharpton.

Supporters of the *World Socialist Web Site* distributed around 7,000 copies of "Torture, police killings and the militarization of America" and discussed the political issues behind the police violence with demonstrators in New York.

"People are coming out in protest because of years of pent-up frustration," Marcus, a teacher, said. "In the 1960s, there were certain gains to suppress the anger of the people, but now the mirage is gone. We are fed up with what is happening.

"I think they will try and make these protests go away through some token concessions like more training for officers and that police will have to wear body cameras," Marcus added. "These measures have

already failed to change anything. We might get a token reform like that, but it is just so the plutocrats can keep running this country."

Jean, a senior at Lehman College, remarked, "I feel happy that we could come together against this injustice. The poor in this country are so oppressed that cops can just kill an innocent person. The police have the support of the people who own everything. Government officials and the people with money support the cops, so they are allowed to get away with everything.

"Things will just get worse unless we come out and protest against this, which is why I am out here today."

Victor, a city inspector, said of the police killings, "The system we live in tolerates this and is part of these killings, and it believes that this kind of repression needs to be done. It is getting to be like when Hoover was head of the FBI, and felt like we should not have civil rights.

"I am a big guy, and if an officer is scared of me, he probably should not be a cop. At the same time I am aware of this, so I try and carry myself a certain way, try and show my son that you have to act a certain way and be careful, but this doesn't always work. How are you supposed to act around officers when a situation can go from zero to sixty instantly?"

Asked why the police could kill with impunity, Victor said, "This is part of the system, like capitalism. Capitalism requires inequality, and the one percent on the top need to know they are safe. It must be stressful for them, and they only feel safe when they are on someone else's throat.

"The corporations dictate what we live with. They have their own agenda, and they are the ones that the politicians listen to. The politicians don't listen to us; they don't count us. That is why we are out here. We

are out here today saying ‘we want to be counted.’”

Ben, an ironworker, commented, “We feel like it is a big injustice. We can’t let a crime or misuse of authority go unpunished.

“These officers aren’t prosecuted because the city does not want to look bad and admit that they make mistakes and risk losing their authority. They are probably letting us protest now as a way to save face.”

Asked about the police repression in Ferguson, Ben added, “The police were using military equipment to incite people, and the media just ignored all the peaceful protests that were happening. People are angry so they come out and take to the streets.

“The media tries to make these protests a race issue, but it is really about an abuse of power. De Blasio does the same thing,” he added.

Vicente carried a homemade sign with the number 43 painted on it. “The Mexican police killed 43 students in Mexico,” he explained. “It is the same system of police retaliation. This is capitalism. So we try to work together to end this. It is like this all over. Even in Palestine. If we work together, we will end this brutality.”

Responding to the WSWWS statement, Soriano remarked, “Police killings are connected with the torture methods used by the government. If you use torture you think everyone is your enemy, everyone is a terrorist.

“I think organization is very important. It is a little bit different in Mexico, but the point is the same. We have to stand together. I made the sign we are carrying to call for the unity of Mexican and American people in the fight against capitalism, which is a class struggle.”

Hector, a paralegal and aspiring attorney, commented, “This is not just a racial question. I was just reading about David Hook, a rural Caucasian man in Georgia who was shot six times by police in a drug raid. They didn’t find any drugs, he didn’t threaten officers with a weapon, but none of the officers are being charged.

“This is all part of a growing trend. The police are less like police and more like an occupying force. This is not how things are supposed to be. The government should be afraid of the people instead of the people being afraid of the government.

Hector added, “There is also an issue of inequality—this has become too much. People are taking to the streets because we have economic inequality and

legal inequality. Now people can buy justice, and that is for the benefit of the prison system, the media, and the military-industrial complex.

“We were promised freedom as part of the American dream, and now that is being denied to us. Instead the police get violent against anyone who wants change.”

After the official march ended, thousands remained in the streets, stopping traffic in Manhattan and shutting down the Brooklyn Bridge. A group of protesters continued on to Brooklyn neighborhoods, including to the housing project in East New York where Akai Gurley was shot, unprovoked, by police in a darkened stairwell.

No arrests were reported Saturday in the course of the overwhelmingly peaceful demonstration.

Officials, however, reported one incident on the Brooklyn Bridge, claiming two police officers were assaulted while trying to prevent a trash can from being thrown. New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio immediately seized on the report, issuing a statement Saturday evening threatening that “those who reject peaceful protest and provoke violence can expect immediate arrest and prosecution.”



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