

Students protest Madison, Wisconsin police killing

Niles Williamson
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Students converged on the state capitol building Monday to protest the police killing of unarmed African American teenager Anthony Robinson, Jr. over the weekend. Capitol police estimated that 1,500 students participated in the demonstration, while protests organizers put the number at 3,000.

Robinson was killed Friday night when Matt Kenny, a 12-year veteran of the Madison Police Department (MPD), forced his way into Robinson's home and fatally shot him. He was responding to reports of a disturbance on the city's Near East Side. Robinson was reportedly jumping into the street and messing around with his friends in the area.

Kenny has been placed on paid administrative leave.

The killing was the second time that Kenny fatally shot someone. In 2007 the Madison police officer shot and killed 48-year-old Ronald Brandon, a mentally ill white man who was brandishing a pellet gun. That incident was declared a "suicide-by-cop," and Kenny was given a commendation of valor for his actions.

Protests began the night of the killing, shortly after word got out that Robinson had been killed by the police. On Saturday, Robinson's friends and other protestors were mocked by police officers when they gathered outside of the home where he was slain to lay flowers at a make-shift memorial.

Walk-outs were reported at all four Madison public high schools as well as Sun Prairie High School, which Robinson graduated from in 2014. The high schools students march was also joined by several hundred college students from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

After filling the rotunda of the capitol building with chants of "Justice for Tony" and hanging a large banner which read "Black Lives Matter," the students moved to the City-County Building where they

demanded a meeting with Democratic Party Mayor Paul Soglin and Police Chief Mike Koval. "We demand that the officer who shot our brother be arrested," the crowd chanted.

Soglin addressed the crowd and later told reporters that he hoped Madison would set the standard for controlling protests that erupt in response to police shootings. Over the weekend Soglin also released a statement in which he praised the MPD as "one of the finest departments in the Country."

Koval was reportedly not in the building at the time and thus did not address the assembled students or speak to the press that was present. He instead released a statement on his official city blog. He apologized for the murder of the teenager "who [sic] life was ended far too soon," and asked for the forgiveness of the young man's family.

Koval called for the protestors to put their faith in the investigation of the killing being undertaken by the Wisconsin Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI). "I would urge that everyone consider that the foundations of the much-maligned criminal justice system should still pay heed to the basic requirements of due process and fundamental fairness," he wrote.

This comes after local prosecutors orchestrated the exoneration last year of Ferguson, Missouri police officer Darren Wilson, who killed unarmed teenager Michael Brown. This decision was endorsed by the Obama administration last week, when it announced that it would not be filing federal charges against Wilson.

Robinson's family held a press conference Monday outside of the house where he was shot and killed. Turin Carter, Robinson's uncle, drew the connection between Robinson's slaying and the problem of police violence and brutality throughout the United States.

“This is a bigger issue than Tony. This highlights a universal problem with law enforcement and how its procedures have been carried out.”

The walk-outs and march were organized in-part by the Young Gifted and Black Coalition, a local black nationalist protest group. They have previously organized protests against the Madison Police Department and in opposition to the construction of a new jail in the city. The demands of the group are extremely limited and centered on race, including a call for the jailing and policing of African Americans proportional to their percentage of the population in the city, which is in the single digits.

The Madison School District also sought to keep the protests limited by calling on community leaders to attend the protest and dispatching several busses to take students back to their schools after the rally at the capitol. Students were allowed to skip school with an excuse from their parents.

“In general, we thought it was important that if students chose to demonstrate, that we ensure they are safe and provide positive adult presence to support our students as they express their concerns, grief and questions,” school district spokeswoman Rachel Strauch-Nelson told the *Wisconsin State Journal*.



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