

Chicago police brutality and the Democratic Party

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There are some events that starkly expose the reality of class relations and class rule in the United States. Such is the case with the brutal police murder of 17-year-old Laquan McDonald and the subsequent orchestrated cover-up involving the entire political establishment in Chicago, Illinois, backed by the Obama administration.

The Democratic Party in Chicago, led by Mayor Rahm Emanuel, is engaged in a desperate effort to contain the immense popular revulsion and anger that has followed the forced release—against Emanuel’s own determined efforts—of damning video evidence of the execution-style murder of McDonald by police on October 20, 2014.

On Tuesday, Emanuel fired police chief Garry McCarthy in a transparent act of damage control. Whatever the police chief’s role in the cover-up, it is clear to everyone that Emanuel threw him to the wolves to protect his own skin. Facing questions from the media, the normally arrogant Emanuel defensively said he had made “mistakes.” He said McCarthy had to go because he had lost the “trust and confidence” of the public but dodged suggestions that he should resign for the same reason.

Last week, after a long legal battle initiated by a local freelance journalist, the city released the video from a police dashboard camera, which exploded the lies of police who claimed that they fired in self-defense. The video shows Chicago policeman Jason Van Dyke firing two shots that strike the black teenager as he is moving away from the cops before he falls to the ground, followed by another 14 shots into McDonald’s crumpled body.

What followed was a systematic effort to conceal this crime. Police threatened motorists with arrest if they did not leave the scene and refused to take their

statements. The cops later took the footage of a security camera at a nearby Burger King and deleted 86 minutes, according to a manager at the store.

For 13 months, including during the entire period in which Emanuel faced a tough reelection campaign, the mayor suppressed the video and protected the identity of the killer cop. He was joined in this conspiracy by the City Council, including its Black Caucus, which voted to pay \$5 million to McDonald’s family on the condition that the video be kept from the public.

The explosive character of these developments was reflected in a lead editorial published in the *New York Times* on Wednesday, which acknowledged the “conspiracy of concealment” by a “historically corrupt law enforcement agency that is well versed in the art of hiding misconduct, brutality—and even torture.”

Notably absent in the *Times* editorial, however, was any reference to either the Democratic Party or the Obama administration. In fact, the *Times* itself is participating in a cover-up aimed at obscuring the real political significance of the conspiracy in Chicago.

Mayor Emanuel expresses the nexus of finance capital and political power that come together in the Democratic Party. After serving in the Clinton administration, he earned millions at the investment bank Wasserstein Perella & Co. A three-term Illinois congressman and chairman of the House Democratic Caucus, he then served as Obama’s chief of staff before resigning to run for mayor in 2011.

President Obama himself is the political offspring of the corrupt Democratic Party political machine that has run Chicago for the last eight decades. Obama has the closest ties to the city’s corporate and financial elite, which rely on the brute force of the police to contain the immense social and class tensions in Chicago.

There can be no doubt that Emanuel consulted with

the Obama administration throughout the year-long cover-up of the police murder of McDonald. Indeed, Emanuel sought to justify blocking release of the video on the grounds that making it public would disrupt an ongoing investigation of the shooting by the FBI and Obama's Justice Department.

The Justice Department has been conducting a so-called investigation for over a year while it had access to a video that demonstrates without a shadow of doubt that Van Dyke should be prosecuted for murder. Instead, the Obama administration joined the conspiracy to protect the Chicago cop, Mayor Emanuel and the Democratic political establishment in the city.

On a national scale the Obama administration has conducted no prosecutions of cops—who have killed 1,090 people this year and are on pace to surpass last year's total of 1,108. Meanwhile, the administration has provided military hardware to police departments throughout the country, including for the suppression of protests against police killings in Ferguson, Missouri and Baltimore, Maryland.

This is the reality of class rule in America: violence, criminality and cover-up. The efforts to prevent public exposure of the murder of Laquan McDonald go hand-in-hand with the Obama administration's own campaign to shield torturers, defend and expand the illegal and unconstitutional spying on the American people and assert the right to assassinate citizens without due process.

The police are a critical component of an apparatus of repression and violence aimed at containing and suppressing the explosive class tensions in the United States.

In Chicago, Emanuel has overseen a brutal campaign of austerity, including the shutdown of 50 public schools, the layoff of 1,000 teachers and attacks on city worker pensions, on the one hand, while handing over corporate tax breaks and other incentives that have made the city a center of financial speculation, and the home of 15 billionaires, including the financier and real estate mogul Penny Pritzker chosen by Obama to be his commerce secretary.

Nationally, the corporate and financial aristocracy, with the assistance of its representatives among both Democrats and Republicans, has utilized the economic crisis that erupted in 2008 to transfer trillions of dollars to Wall Street while intensifying the assault on jobs,

wage and social programs for the vast majority of the population.

With social tensions reaching a breaking point, the police increasingly function as an occupying force, given a license to kill in order to defend the wealth and power of the ruling class. Hardly a week passes without another revelation of brutal police violence, while many more atrocities never see the light of day.

Those factions of the Democratic Party, from Jesse Jackson to the pseudo-left International Socialist Organization and the ISO-run Chicago Teachers Union, who claim that the plague of police violence is fundamentally a question of racism are perpetuating a conscious political fraud. Their aim is to whitewash the role of the Democratic Party and the system of class oppression and social inequality that it upholds.

No amount of damage control, however, can conceal the fact that the killer cops are the armed forces of the ruling class, which confronts an ever more hostile population and a younger generation of workers, black, white and immigrant, who will not accept a future of poverty, dictatorship and war.



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