

“I am against something wrong, regardless of what the color of someone’s skin is”

Protesters speak out on police killings

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In Washington, DC, thousands protested throughout the weekend against the police killings in Louisiana and Minnesota. On Sunday, a rally and prayer vigil held outside the African American Civil War Memorial on the U Street Corridor drew a crowd of over 500 youth and workers.

In contrast to the racist conceptions preached from the podium by the event’s organizers, which included the NAACP and the Nation of Islam, the event saw a diverse turnout of young people from all racial and ethnic backgrounds.

“I think it is an issue that mayors and the city’s political establishments are let off too lightly,” said Robert, who told the WSWWS his family had worked in steel in Pennsylvania. “It is the mayor who appoints the police chief and oversees the work of the police.”

Robert stated that the issue of racism was a means to divide the working class from itself, and that white racism wasn’t directed only at African-Americans, but as a means of the capitalist class seeking to pacify white workers. “If you’ve ever served in the army, you’d see that blacks and whites definitely can see eye to eye, and the ruling class uses them when it serves its benefits. This is an international phenomenon; they are trying to divide workers from their class brothers in other countries as well, such as Koreans from Japanese in Japan.”

A woman who identified herself as a relative of Philando Castile, the young man who was savagely gunned down by police in Minnesota just days earlier, told the WSWWS, “I’m just here to mourn the loss of my cousin.” Speaking with great emotion, she said, “I will not allow you or anyone to tell me that this justice system works when things like this happen.”

Speaking of Philando, she recalled, “He would telephone us after he’d get pulled over by police and say that they were profiling him. This is simply too much.” (Press reports indicate that Castile was stopped by police 52 times over the last ten years while driving in the Twin Cities area.)

She continued, “It is a class issue; the rich saw poor whites and blacks coming together so they promoted racism to divide them. I am against something wrong, regardless of what the color of someone’s skin is; I remember seeing a white guy tasered for what must have been 20 minutes by the police on a video and I was and am still outraged by it.”

“There are white people and black people that have been misled to believe that class doesn’t exist; we need someone to educate them,” she stated.

In Jacksonville, Florida, workers and young people marched through downtown by the hundreds on Sunday afternoon to protest police violence. A group of several hundred marchers rallied first at the Jacksonville sheriff’s office headquarters and then proceeded to the Duval County Courthouse where a rally was held. Speakers called for an end to police killings and oppression. Protesters chanted, “No justice, no peace,” and “Black lives matter.”

The Jacksonville sheriff’s office presence was heavy, with officers on foot spread throughout downtown and police cruisers lining the streets.

Several protestors denounced local state’s attorney Angela Corey, who leads the state in prosecutions of juveniles as adults. Others spoke out about the killing in May of D’Angelo Stallworth, a 28-year-old Jacksonville man, who was shot six times in the back by police while unarmed.

As the rally concluded, protesters marched towards the interstate with the intention of blocking it but were stopped by the sheriff's department. As the march proceeded through a commercial area, many spontaneously joined the protest. Workers in nearby shops came out in support of the demonstrators. One fast-food worker was seen walking off the job in his uniform and apron to join the marchers.

As Jacksonville police continued to block protesters from entering the on-ramps to the interstate, the marchers crossed the Main Street Bridge and circled back downtown. The protest ended in a sit-in in front of police headquarters.

Reporters from the *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to protesters outside the courthouse.

Local hip hop artist Boo Deezy spoke to the WSWS in front of the courthouse. "Police violence has been going on so long, something has to happen," he said, adding, "Violence in any form won't change our circumstances."

When asked if any political leaders had responded to the police killings, he said, "We as civilians are pawns and pawns have no voice. This has been going on for years. Clinton couldn't change it, Obama couldn't change it. With what happened to Trayvon Martin, Freddie Gray, Michael Brown, it's like we're caught in a rogue wave, but when the wave hits the beach you can't stop the water."

Two young women protesting on the courthouse steps, Addison, and Reagan, told the WSWS, "We are here to protest the multiple instances of racist police killings. If you take an oath to protect you can't be racist. When you have police going into neighborhoods with their stereotypes, where everyone lives in poverty and fear, this is going to happen."

When asked if they saw a connection between escalating U.S. militarism overseas and police violence domestically, Addison said, "I do see a link. The more we promote violence in other countries the more we create tensions here."



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