

Hundreds arrested in US protests against police killings

Shannon Jones
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Large demonstrations continued across the United States over the weekend sparked by recent police murders in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Falcon Heights, Minnesota, and New York City. The new wave of protests followed the release of video footage showing police shooting and killing unarmed black men on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Hundreds were arrested as police confronted protesters in a heavy-handed and provocative manner. In many locations, officers were outfitted in riot gear and armed with military-style weapons.

Besides Baton Rouge and the Twin Cities area in Minneapolis, where the killings took place, demonstrations were reported in Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Ft. Lauderdale, Los Angeles, Memphis, Nashville, Newport, RI, New York City, Oakland, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, Washington D.C. and many other cities.

At a protest in Baton Rouge on Sunday, the day after the mass arrests, hundreds assembled at the Wesley United Methodist Church and marched on the state capitol building downtown. There were many students and youth, as well some local workers and elderly.

Danielle Edwards, a 21-year-old student from the University of Louisiana-Lafayette, told *World Socialist Web Site* reporters that she had come because of her disillusionment with the role of the police. She wondered aloud if she could be a victim of police violence and “become the next hashtag.”

After proceeding through downtown, some marchers sought to continue their protest but were blocked by riot gear-equipped police who threatened to fire tear gas to disperse them.

Among those arrested over the weekend in Baton Rouge was prominent Black Lives Matter activist DeRay McKesson. Police reportedly slammed

McKesson to the ground in what appeared to be a deliberate targeting. The arrest was captured on live video feed. A number of police officers were also injured after clashes with protesters.

Tens of thousands turned out for the demonstrations despite attempts by the media and government officials to create an atmosphere of official mourning and sympathy for the police following the murder of five policemen in Dallas, Texas Thursday by an African-American veteran of the Afghanistan war who was angered by the police killings in Minnesota and Louisiana.

In the face of the relentless attempt to portray the killings by police in strictly racial terms, large numbers of black, white and Hispanic workers and young people marched in cities across America to express their shock and anger, showing by their actions that they did not regard these crimes as of concern only to African-Americans.

The wave of protests followed police violence that took the lives of Philando Castile in Falcon Heights, Minnesota and Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge. Bystanders recorded the killing of both men on video. Castile, age 32, was shot and killed after a traffic stop on July 5. The shooting took place in front of his fiancée, Diamond Reynolds, who was sitting in the front passenger seat. She broadcast the aftermath of the shooting live on Facebook.

Sterling was gunned down outside a convenience store where he had been selling CDs. Police tackled him and pinned him to the ground where they shot him execution style.

In another police shooting, 37-year-old Delrawn Small was killed in Brooklyn July 4 by an off-duty cop. The murder took place after Small confronted the officer, who was in an unmarked vehicle, over a traffic

incident. Small was unarmed at the time of the shooting. The events unfolded in front of Small's wife and children, who were still in the car at the time.

Over the weekend multiracial protests took place from coast to coast. In one of the largest demonstrations more than 10,000 protested peacefully Friday night in Atlanta, Georgia. They marched into downtown, where they were confronted by police who prevented them from entering the Downtown Connector highway. More than a dozen people were arrested in the city over the course of three days of protests.

In St. Paul, more than 100 people were arrested after demonstrators blocked off a freeway. A large group of protesters marched from the residence of Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton over to Interstate 94, which they blocked for several hours before police drove them from the freeway using smoke bombs and pepper spray.

Police set bond at between \$250 to \$400 per person for some 120 people arrested in Baton Rouge Saturday night and Sunday morning. In addition to McKesson, police also arrested a local reporter for National Public Radio.

On Sunday protesters again took to the streets of Baton Rouge. They were confronted by police in riot gear firing tear gas.

In New York City about 20 protesters were arrested as some 500 demonstrators marched in front of city hall in downtown Manhattan to denounce the shooting of Delrawn Small.

Hundreds of protesters marched in downtown Fort Lauderdale Saturday to the Broward County Courthouse chanting "No Justice, No Peace and "Hands up, don't shoot." Prisoners at the Broward County Jail tapped on the windows in response to the chants of protesters. Several hundred also protested in downtown Miami, briefly blocking intersections.

More than a thousand people rallied at Campus Martius in downtown Detroit Friday night. A large contingent of police monitored the protest, including officers mounted on horseback, in helicopters and perched on rooftops.

Protesters also demonstrated in front of the White House in Washington D.C. on Friday. Protesters were back in Washington on Sunday, with some 500 rallying at the African-American civil war memorial.

The shooting of the five police officers in Dallas is

being manipulated by the media and political authorities in an effort to further criminalize dissent. US flags have been ordered flown at half-staff, and President Obama has cut short a trip to Europe and plans to attend a memorial service in Dallas on Tuesday. There has been almost nonstop, sensationalized coverage of the investigation into the shooting on the major networks while reports of the repression directed against protests over killings by police are being buried.

There has been virtually no official criticism of the decision by police to kill the alleged police shooter in Dallas, Micah Xavier Johnson, using a robot-controlled bomb. This is the first time police have used a device to kill someone and represents a marked escalation of police repression, bringing home to America the methods used by US military forces overseas.

There was no explanation of why police used a bomb rather than nonlethal means such as tear gas to flush out the alleged shooter or simply waited until the wounded man, who was surrounded by police, surrendered. His killing was all the more extraordinary given that police were working on the assumption at the time that Johnson was part of a larger conspiracy. His killing meant that he could not be questioned about his ties to a broader network.

The attempt by the news media and politicians such as President Obama and presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton to present police killings in strictly racial terms, directed solely against blacks, flies in the face of reality. In fact whites comprise the largest single group of police shooting victims.

For example the media has almost completely ignored the shooting death of 19-year-old white youth Dylan Noble on June 25 at the hands of police in Fresno, California. Police shot Noble, who was unarmed, after a brief car chase. The young man was lying on the ground with his arms raised in the air when he was shot multiple times.



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