

Chicago police kill two over Thanksgiving holiday

Jessica Goldstein
28 November 2016

Chicago police fatally shot two people over the Thanksgiving holiday.

Kajuan Raye, 19, was shot and killed by police in the Englewood neighborhood on Chicago's South Side around 11:00 p.m. on Wednesday. Cleotha Mitchell, 37, was shot and killed by police in the Homan Square neighborhood at 12:30 a.m. on Friday.

Raye was standing at a bus stop on Wednesday night when two police cars pulled up alongside him. When he took off running, police got out of their vehicles, chased him down the street and shot him in the back, killing him. Police claim that Raye was a suspect in a battery incident that they were responding to in the area, but the details of any such incident, if it occurred, remain unknown.

An officer involved in the chase was recorded shouting, "He's got a gun!" However, no gun was found at the scene or on Raye's person. The officer who shot Raye was not wearing a body camera. All indications are that this was an act of murder of an unarmed man.

Mitchell was killed by police officers who claim he was a suspect in a nearby homicide. However, Mitchell's sister insists that he was not involved in the shooting and that the police had mistaken him for another man. Mitchell's friends and family, who he was visiting at the time, told local news reporters that he had stepped outside for a cigarette when police shot him. Though the police reportedly found a gun at the scene, it is not clear whether the gun belonged to or was used by Mitchell.

Both killings follow the fatal shooting of a 25-year-old man, as yet unidentified, on November 19 in West Englewood. In this case, police allege they saw him shoot at another man. Police say they shot the victim after he was ordered to drop his weapon and did not.

The young man died after being taken to the hospital.

Another 26-year-old man at the scene was shot in the abdomen and is still alive. It is unclear yet whether police shot that man as well. The identities of both men have yet to be released.

The names of the officers involved in the three shootings have not been made public. Each of the officers involved has been placed on desk duty for at least 30 days, as is procedure for the Chicago Police Department (CPD) in cases of officer-involved shootings. All incidences are reportedly under investigation by the City of Chicago Independent Police Review Authority (IPRA), which has been involved in covering up police crimes and firing investigators who refuse to comply.

IPRA was formed in 2007 as a civilian committee to replace the Office of Professional Standards, a review board that existed within the CPD. The initiation of this "reform" did nothing to stop police murders.

The three recent shootings take place one year after the release of dashcam footage of the shooting of a 17-year-old black youth, Laquan McDonald, by CPD Officer Jason Van Dyke. Van Dyke was indicted shortly after the release of the footage on November 24, 2015, over one year after he shot and killed McDonald. Van Dyke was accused of first-degree murder, but only in the wake of mass protests and demands for the resignation of Democratic Mayor Rahm Emanuel and the city council.

Since then, Emanuel has implemented a few fraudulent police "reforms" aimed at defusing social anger, while at the same time working to increase the "diversity" of the police force with hundreds of new hires. In January of this year, Emanuel proposed a doubling of the number of Tasers available to police. Tasers produce so-called "non-lethal" incapacitation

with painful electric shocks. The devices have killed hundreds and have been used as a form of torture in American prisons.

On November 22, Emanuel rolled out a plan to significantly increase the number of police in Chicago. The plan includes 970 new recruits over the next two years, and the hiring and training of 516 new armed police officers. Emanuel claimed that hiring more police was necessary to address the wave of violence that has swept the city in 2016, in which 4,000 people have been wounded and nearly 700 killed so far this year.

In fact, the increase in violence in the city of Chicago is primarily due to the escalation of the attack on the working class in the years after the 2008 financial crisis. Over the last eight years, aided by both the Democratic Party establishment and the trade unions, the working class in Chicago has suffered mass layoffs, public school closings, mental health facility closures and sharp reductions in basic social services, such as food assistance and other social services that provide for basic needs.

Most of the jobs created during the so-called “economic recovery” under Obama have been low-wage, with few or no benefits. Many workers remain underemployed, or unemployed for long periods of time, and turn to crime as a means of supporting themselves.

As part of his effort to recruit a greater number of African-American and Hispanic cops, Emanuel hired Deborah Farmer, of Brown Farmer Media Group, for \$85,000 to use social media marketing and retired officers to recruit black youth.

Efforts to “diversify” the Chicago police force amount to nothing but an attempt to use identity politics, long a tool of the Democratic Party and the ruling establishment, to divide social opposition in the working class.

The addition of more black and Hispanic police officers to the ranks of the CPD is meant to be seen as a progressive reform, since minorities are disproportionately represented among the victims of police violence. But such a measure will do nothing to make Chicago police less violent, or more “connected” to the most impoverished communities, as Emanuel and advocates for reform claim.

The Chicago Police Department is one of the most

violent in the country, with police killings surpassing the number of shootings carried out even by the notorious Los Angeles Police Department over the years from 2010 to 2015. More than 50 percent of the Chicago police force is non-white, and more than half of officers who shot at workers and youth in the past five years were black or Hispanic.

The issue of police violence is not fundamentally one of race, but of class. Under the incoming Trump administration, a massive escalation of police powers and national surveillance programs will take place, as the ruling class faces the threat of ever greater opposition to its brutal austerity measures and attacks on democratic rights from the masses of working people across the US and the world.

The strengthening of police powers, supported by both Democrats and Republicans, will mean an escalation of police killings like those that have occurred in Chicago over the past week.



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact