

Pseudo-left groups push identity politics on seventh day of St. Louis protests

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As police in full riot gear with batons in hand stood by, hundreds of peaceful protesters gathered in downtown St. Louis, Missouri Thursday evening on the seventh day of protests over the acquittal of white police officer Jason Stockley for the 2011 murder of Anthony Lamar Smith, who was African American.

In a marked shift from previous days of protest, Thursday night's event was dominated by pseudo-left organizations promoting racist politics. The protest was officially named a "White Allies Only" rally, where white people were asked to come out to support Black Lives Matter.

Nearly four hundred protesters met early in the evening at Kiener Plaza Park in downtown St. Louis for the event. From there, they marched to nearby Busch Stadium where a Billy Joel concert was taking place.

At one point in the protest, organizers of the rally requested that all white protesters move to the front of the protest in order to deter possible police confrontations. According to Black Lives Matter, the purpose of "white allies" is to "amplify and recenter the lives of black people while standing in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter Movement."

A leading organizer of the rally was a member of Socialist Alternative who repeatedly led the protesters in chanting "white silence is violence." Multiple posters carried by protesters bore the statements "Black Lives Matter" and "White Silence = White Violence." The Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) fully endorsed the racist narrative and promoted the event on their local Facebook page. Their flag was carried by a DSA member and was waved above the protesters throughout the night.

Black Lives Matter representatives and Socialist Alternative members gave speeches throughout the protest during which one female speaker told the crowd

of protesters, "Police need to be trained better. Had the St. Louis police department received better training, Smith would not be dead."

For almost two hours, protesters marched near Busch Stadium and eventually returned to where they began at Kiener Plaza Park. The protest dispersed around 9:00 p.m.

Socialist Alternative, the Democratic Socialists of America, Black Lives Matter, and the many other organizations that operate in the orbit of the Democratic Party insist that the issue of police violence is fundamentally a product of racism. The political conclusions which necessarily flow from this lack of analysis can only be a series of empty reforms: that more officers of color be hired into the police force; that police be "better" trained.

Racism has always been an ideological tool of the ruling class. The renewed efforts from pseudo-left groups to remove the issue of racism from its real social, political and historical context are employed to obscure the fundamental class divisions in society and present racism as something pervasive, ineradicable and deeply embedded in the American psyche. Their real aim is to preempt the development of a broader, deeper and politically independent movement of the working class united across all racial, ethnic and national lines.

With three months still left in the year St. Louis police have already fatally shot eight people in 2017, which is high even for the notorious St. Louis police force. Comparatively, there were five people killed by St. Louis police in all of 2016.

All of those killed this year have been poor and working-class people, many of whom lived in deeply impoverished parts of city. Two of the eight were white, and the other six were African American. One of

the victims, Robin White, had mental health issues and at least two others were killed by police in their own homes. In addition to those who were killed, police have shot and wounded seven other people so far this year.

Police in the United States are trained to see the working class and poor as a hostile enemy. Anything less than complete submissiveness is grounds for officers to unleash deadly force on their victims. In some instances, even the most casual encounters with police have proven to be deadly.

The role racism often plays in any given act of brutality is more fundamentally rooted in the irreconcilable conflict between the interests of the ruling elite and those of the working class. This conflict has intensified alongside the explosion in social inequality throughout the US and the world and a quarter-century of unending US imperialism abroad.

The Socialist Equality Party opposes all expressions of racism by exposing its roots in a society grounded in the exploitation of the working class regardless of race, ethnicity, or nationality. Racism can only be fought with a revolutionary program to unite all sections of workers against their common capitalist oppressors. This must become the basis for the development of a mass movement of the working class in defense of democratic and social rights.



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