

# More than 80 arrested in Sacramento protesting decision not to charge police in murder of Stephon Clark

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Sacramento police arrested 84 protesters Monday night demonstrating against the district attorney's decision to not bring charges against the two officers who fired at Stephon Clark 20 times in his grandmother's backyard last March, killing the unarmed 22-year-old African American man. At least three local reporters were included in the total arrested.

The protest came two days after Sacramento County District Attorney Anne Marie Schubert announced that Sacramento police officers Jared Robinet and Terrence Mercadal would not face prosecution because they acted reasonably and "honestly, without hesitation, believed [Clark] had a gun." Seven to eight of the bullets they fired hit Clark in the back as he turned away from them. The only thing he had in his hand was a cell phone.

The protest began around 6:30 p.m. at a Trader Joe's grocery store near the "Fab 40s" section of East Sacramento, a more affluent part of the city that is predominantly white. The protest wound through the neighborhood and circled back to the store. According to police spokesperson Sgt. Vance Chandler, a property owner claimed at least five cars in the area had been keyed and police deemed the protest unlawful because protesters were standing in the street.

Chandler said officers ordered protesters to disperse 10 times over a two-hour period. After police demanded protesters leave, a number of organizers encouraged people to go home. Some protesters stayed near the Trader Joe's parking lot and eventually moved to a bridge over a nearby highway. The remaining protesters were then blocked by a line of police officers in riot gear. Police began systematically isolating and detaining people in small groups.

One of those arrested was a Sacramento veteran reporter Dale Kasler who was covering the protest. In an interview with the *New York Times*, Kasler said the demonstration was peaceful until about 100 riot police officers arrived and advanced on protesters around 9 p.m. Demonstrators were soon surrounded by armored police on all sides, making it impossible to disperse. Kasler was livestreaming the event on Facebook before officers detained him.

"I was following the marchers as they crossed the freeway overpass on 51st Street," Kasler said. "It became apparent as we got to the other side that there was nowhere to go and that the police had basically sealed everything off."

"There were 50, 60, 70 people all just sort of cordoned off into this small area at the south end of the overpass. They just came and started detaining everyone, one by one. And I got caught up in that."

A photographer for the *Sacramento Bee*, Hector Amezcua, was pushed to the ground by an officer and his equipment was damaged, according to the newspaper.

The police's response to Monday's march was a stark contrast to previous demonstrations. In last year's initial protest, after Clark was killed, demonstrators shut down Interstate 5 and blocked people from entering an NBA basketball game. Officers only made a handful of arrests.

For the fifth year in a row, police in the US have killed more than 1,000 people and have resorted to heavy-handed responses to the opposition of police killings. Last September, police fired pepper balls into, and forcefully dispersed, a demonstration against the murder of 26-year-old Botham Shem Jean in Dallas,

Texas. In 2014, police responded to the eruption of anger over the murder of Michael Brown by turning Ferguson, Missouri, into a warzone.

The unabated wave of police killings and the aggressive crackdown on opposition to police violence is an indictment of the bankrupt politics of the Democratic Party and the pseudo-left, who promote racial identity politics as a solution to police killings in the US.

After Clark was killed, the Democratic Party and allied Black Lives Matter (BLM) activists in Sacramento worked to divert anger away from the city's first black police chief and nurtured illusions in police reform.

This purposely masks the role of class in police violence in the US. An analysis by the WSWS found that police killings in the US are primarily dictated by class and not race. The report found the majority of those killed came from working-class and poor backgrounds, regardless of race.

The racist reply by BLM and the pseudo-left to police brutality only serves to divide the working class and divert opposition into support for the Democrats, who claim to have an answer to the epidemic through illusory reforms.

*The author also recommends:*

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