

New York cops caught on video assaulting unarmed man

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On Wednesday night, 20-year-old Fitzroy Gayle, hands held up in the air and calling for help, was thrown to the ground by half-dozen police in the Canarsie neighborhood of Brooklyn. The unarmed man was beaten and handcuffed. Video of the brutal assault was shared on Twitter and has sparked outrage around the globe with more than 13 million views.

Gayle was on his way home from his second job when he got a call from his mother to pick up a few items from the store. He then met with another man and they went to 100% Playground, a nearby city park, to smoke marijuana.

The video shows Gayle being detained by a man in a dark jacket, tan pants and a ballcap. Gayle can be heard asking why he is being stopped and saying that he is innocent. At no point does the man identify himself as a police officer or tell Gayle why he has been detained. The man, who was, in fact, a New York Police Department (NYPD) plainclothes cop, reaches into his pocket to pull out a communications device. As Gayle tries to move away, the man pulls out a yellow Taser and threatens him with it.

The undercover cop called for backup. The scene that followed resembled a gang assault, as several officers piled on the defenseless young man. Gayle was then detained by the cops and released a day later.

Under the law, Gayle, at most, should have been ticketed for a misdemeanor and fined \$50. In July 2014, the Brooklyn district attorney announced that individuals would not get prosecuted for some marijuana charges. The policy expanded in 2018 so that possession of marijuana under two ounces was no longer criminalized.

Anyone who has seen the video of the police murder of Staten Island resident Eric Garner in 2014—or has witnessed one of the frequent police assaults in New

York City—knows that any of the behaviors of the police in this case—from the threats of the undercover cop to the beatdown by his fellow officers a few minutes later—may have deadly results.

Garner's murder has been lodged in the consciousness of millions of New Yorkers, including Daphne Gayle, Fitzroy Gayle's mother, who after viewing the video of her son's beating told ABC13, "My heart was racing. I couldn't even speak. I thought they were going to tell me he was dead. ... I kept looking at it and was saying to myself is this going to end like another Eric Garner situation."

As is evident, however, with the numerous cases of police violence in New York City, and around the United States as a whole, police are not concerned with the enforcement of the law but with the active suppression of the democratic rights of the workers and young people. Only few days ago, an unarmed man in Chicago was beaten and shot by police in a subway station. The officers are currently under investigation but, as in most cases of police brutality, it is unlikely that they will face charges.

An investigation is also currently under way into the beating of Gayle, but New York Police Commissioner Dermot Shea is already defending the assaulters, saying, "When you have two people who take off running—I've been in that situation myself—and you don't know what you have ... we will have to take a look at the entirety of it." Despite clear video evidence of brutality committed against a working-class youth, the commissioner refuses to condemn his staff.

The video on Twitter has gotten more than 285,000 likes and 135,000 retweets. Most of the commenters express solidarity with Gayle and outrage at the officers.

Gayle himself later told the *New York Daily News*:

“I’m just glad to be alive. It could’ve been worse. I’ve never been arrested. I try to stay away from police. I was surprised at the time. I’m really not surprised now. It’s expected. They think we don’t know our rights. They try to take advantage of that.”

Some of the comments on Twitter give a sense of how aware people are that basic democratic rights are routinely violated by the cops: @vexjojo, for example, tweeted, “This can’t keep happening this is a clear abuse of power! what happened to innocent until proven guilty they didn’t even ask any questions, didn’t give him his rights, didn’t tell him anything and used excessive force to a man that just wanted to understand”

In some cases, the anger is taking an overtly political form. @thatchick0882 called the Democratic presidential front-runners to action: “ @BernieSanders what we doing about this stuff???? @JoeBiden Y’all want OUR votes??? Do something about this shit. We are TIRED.”

But the Democratic Party is not only incapable of ending police violence but seeks to expand it. The New York City mayor, Democrat Bill de Blasio, hired over 1,300 additional cops, 300 of whom are part of a heavily armed “counter-terrorism” team. Recently, more than 500 police officers have been hired to patrol the city’s subway stations. A few months ago, news broke that under de Blasio the police were collecting DNA from unsuspecting workers and youth, a clear violation of the Fourth Amendment’s ban on unreasonable searches and seizures.

A few days before the shooting in Chicago, Democratic Party Mayor Lori Lightfoot unveiled plans to hire additional police officers to monitor train stations, where the unarmed man was shot.

The beating of Fitzroy Gayle is standard operating procedure in the United States, a country where six-year-olds are arrested by cops for throwing temper tantrums and Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) agents shoot people in the face for protecting their loved ones, while the officers responsible for these injustices are allowed to walk free.



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