

# Protests in Louisville continue day after local restaurant owner killed

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Protests in Louisville, Kentucky continued Monday night in defiance of Trump's threats to mobilize military troops against protesters and the police rampage Sunday night, which led to scores of injuries and the death of a local restaurant owner. David McAtee, a 53-year-old African American, was fatally wounded when police and National Guard troops opened fire on protesters in western Louisville, shortly after midnight on Monday morning.

As with the protests in at least 140 cities across the US, the Louisville protests have been multi-racial and composed primarily of workers and young people. They were not only sparked by the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, but also the killing of Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old African American emergency medical technician killed by Louisville police on March 13.

The *Louisville Courier-Journal* reported that David McAtee, the owner of YaYas BBQ restaurant near the corner of 26th and Broadway, was shot as police and National Guard troops were breaking up a "large crowd" that had gathered after the curfew in the parking lot outside a Dinos Food Mart. According to family members, McAtee died while shielding his niece from a barrage of gunfire.

In a statement following the shooting, Louisville Metro Police Department Chief Steve Conrad claimed that police and military forces "returned fire" after someone first shot at them. Absolutely no evidence of this has been presented, however, and the police later claimed that their body cameras had not been turned on. This has triggered even greater outrage because the three cops involved in the murderous raid of Breonna Taylor's home claimed they were not wearing cameras.

In an effort to mollify anger over the latest killing and cover-up, Mayor Greg Fischer announced that Conrad had been fired. The police chief, however, had already

announced he would retire by the end of June over the death of Taylor.

Kentucky's Democratic Governor Andy Beshear announced that state police would conduct the investigation into McAtee's killing, claiming that their probe would be "independent" and "transparent." Beshear then announced that the curfew would continue and that the National Guard troops would stay put, despite anger over the troops firing on civilians.

Odessa Riley, McAtee's mother, told the *Courier-Journal* that her son was a "community pillar" and a "good son." She added, "All he did on that barbecue corner is try to make a dollar for himself and his family. And they come along and they killed my son." Other family members said that the National Guard needed to be pulled out of the city.

On Monday night, hundreds of workers and young people gathered near the spot that McAtee was killed and in downtown Louisville, as military helicopters circled above and local and state police, along with heavily armed National Guard troops, menaced them. As the curfew fell, police and other forces fired tear gas and chased down protesters.

The police have already carried out scores of arrests, including 40 on Sunday night alone. Among those arrested was the 2020 Kentucky High School Teacher of the Year, Matt Kaufmann, who teaches English at Marion C. Moore High School. The teacher "was arrested this evening for protesting and standing up for #BreonnaTaylor and for Black Lives in Louisville," local activist Hannah Drake wrote on Facebook. "No way he was not peaceful," she said. "He is physically okay but a little roughed up."

Like the other cities where mass protests against police killings are occurring, Louisville is a cauldron of social tension. Kentucky's largest city, with a metropolitan area population of 1.2 million, Louisville is a major industrial

and transportation hub, with more than 13,000 autoworkers at two Ford plants, United Parcel Service's giant World Port air hub, and the GE Appliance Park. There has been widespread anger over unsafe working conditions at each of these workplaces during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Veteran UPS World Port worker Roml Ellis, 55, died of COVID-19 in April. Nearly 4,000 workers at GE Appliance, which was sold by General Electric in 2016 and is now owned by China-based Haier, threatened to strike after several workers tested positive. Teachers at the Jefferson County Public Schools also played the leading role in the sickouts and wildcat strikes over stagnating wages and inadequate school funding last year, which will only intensify after the loss of revenue due to the economic impact of the pandemic.

"I have a lot to say not only about George Floyd, but also about Breonna Taylor," a Ford Kentucky Truck Plant worker told the WSWs. "Breonna was brutally killed during a no-knock search warrant, and she was a first responder EMT worker in Louisville.

"Police officers have been corrupt from the beginning of time. This has been going on far too long. It all comes to a head. Just because you are a police officer doesn't give you the right to keep killing our fellow citizens. It's time for us to take a stand. You have to stand for something or fall for anything. I believe in protesting and getting your voice heard."

"Workers here are sickened by these killings, especially the innocent EMS worker who was shot at least eight times," a veteran Ford worker added. "People, no matter whether they are black or white, are sick of this. That's why they're out there protesting.

"The whole thing is messed up. We're back to work at Ford. They've done some things to improve safety, but people are working so close to each other on the door line and other lines. Our lives are being put in jeopardy. They're building the cars even though they're not selling. The rich have gotten even richer since the pandemic hit. But soon we're going to be told there is no money for schools and other things that workers need."



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