

Australian protesters speak out: “The class systems need to be abolished”

Our reporters
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Socialist Equality Party campaigners and *World Socialist Web Site* reporters took part in mass protests across Australia over the weekend, called in solidarity with demonstrations in the US and internationally triggered by the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

More than 100,000 people defied government threats and denunciations to take part. Participants included workers, students, young people, retirees and professionals (see: “Defying government threats, thousands join Australian protests against police violence”).

Many told the WSWS they had been animated by the police violence inflicted on Aboriginal people. They also raised broader issues, including unprecedented social inequality and a turn to authoritarianism by governments internationally.

Jay, a young Aboriginal university worker, originally from Tasmania, said he attended the Sydney rally “to oppose the injustice that has befallen my people and all other people, all black people across the world, and other minorities. I think what’s been going on, especially in America is dreadful, along with the appalling situation here. There have been 434 Aboriginal deaths in custody since 1991.”

Jay said the US demonstrations were “wonderful.” He condemned US President Donald Trump’s threat to deploy the military against protesters, along with other attacks on democratic rights internationally, saying they were “playing into the vested interests of corporations and the bourgeoisie. They’re definitely not focusing on the needs of the people and the workers. It’s mainly taking place so that the interests of the big corporations, like the mining industry, are still in power.”

Asked if he thought race or class was the fundamental distinction in society, Jay said: “I think it’s really the class that matches us all. I think I would find myself, as

an indigenous man, understanding more the struggles of a poor whitefella than a black billionaire.

“At the end of the day, race and culture is extremely important, but if you’re in completely different income brackets, there’s no way that you can be with each other. The powers that you have when you’re rich, and the abilities that you have to quell workers, really are astronomical.” He noted that Barack Obama, the first African-American US president, had “bombed thousands of small villages around the world.”

Carole-Anne, a writer and teacher, condemned the attempt to ban the Sydney protest. “I think New South Wales [NSW] is becoming a dictatorship,” she said. “Every other state was allowing them, but NSW banned it, even though they approved right-wing anti-vaccine protests last weekend. It’s just beyond words. It gives me a renewed faith in the people of NSW to see so many people turn out regardless.”

Carole-Anne noted that young people were “continually strip-searched by the police. I was surprised to read something on it, and I asked my daughter about it. She said, ‘Mum, I get strip-searched all the time. When I’m going to a concert, we just expect that it will happen.’ That’s not a way for our young people to have to live.

“I mean, it’s guilty until proven innocent. They get picked on for hanging out at shopping centres and train stations, as if the big drug dealers are going to catch trains and hang out at shopping centres. They’re trying to get tighter controls, and to pull the wool over everyone’s eyes to distract from what is really happening. Poverty is continuously getting worse.”

Leah, a 42-year-old musical director, who is Aboriginal, said she was attending “because I believe in equality and I believe in accountability. We have deaths in custody, and those that are responsible should be held accountable.

“You can see equality out here as everyone walks past

us. We are all people, we are all human beings at the end of the day and we should all have the same rights. It's a great show of people power and it's a great show of how the world should move forward, because this is all happening globally. We're all feeling it, even through a pandemic.

"The working class is here. Many of us are unemployed right now. The colour of our skins, and the financial stability of our lives, should not define who we are. We should all be treated equally. The class systems need to be abolished, and they needed to be abolished a long time ago. But money makes the world go round. All colours of the human race are here. We know what murder is. We know it's not right."

Joshua, a TAFE student from a working-class suburb in western Sydney, said he was taking part because of "police violence and the fact that when it takes place, it's police investigating police. There needs to be other people investigating what's happening, rather than the police.

"I think it's a broken system, and it's not just that. It's the elites, the billionaires, the people in control who are just greedy and want money. There is no justice for the health system and no justice for the many. They have built this power over a long time, so it's going to be very hard to knock it down, but this generation seems to have a huge voice."

In Melbourne, **Siyoum**, a security worker, originally from Ethiopia, said: "I'm here today to support the protests for George Floyd, who was killed by a white policeman. Not only now, but before, especially in America, the police have been doing a lot of bad things.

"We support what the American people are doing over there. The police have to stop their violence and Trump has to remove the National Guard. What they're doing is wrong—pushing, hitting, punching people—it's not right."

Joshua, a high school student, said: "It's absolutely horrible that people had to suffer that in the United States. I feel sorry for the family [of George Floyd], and I hope this is what he would have wanted. I'm mainly here today because the justice system is so horrible to indigenous people. I think it's incorrect, how they're suffering. Although I might not entirely understand, I've witnessed it with my own eyes as well."

Will said: "I'm here to support the Aboriginal people of Australia. It's a bit heavy, what's happening internationally, there's been a lot building up. I think it's time for change and there's definitely momentum around the world.

"Things have got to change on all fronts, on the

economic front, and with the coronavirus, tensions are up high. Now it's spilling over—for the right reasons. It's terrible what is happening in the US. Even army generals have argued this is not what the army is for, and that Trump can't claim the right to wage war against his own people. Trump's statement this morning about George Floyd being proud about job creation figures is pretty outrageous."

In Newcastle, **Ferdinando**, a carpenter, said: "I think the protests are a really positive thing right now. With 2020, we're coming into a new generation and this can't keep happening. There's all these facts now about the rise of deaths from police brutality. It shouldn't be happening, there should be fairness. We've got to make change.

"If Scott Morrison wanted everyone in Australia to be fair, he could make it happen, but it's not going to happen from him. Going back to the bushfires, he was a horrible prime minister. That's why protests like this break out. If they're not going to make change, then we have to force them to make change."

Marsheela commented: "I do think it's important that the protests are happening all around the world, it's not only in America and not just in Australia. I definitely agree that class plays a role, 100 percent. When people don't have as much money they're not listened to as much and I think that racism and police brutality does happen a lot more when people are lower class."

David, a bartender, said: "It's very obvious that the police protect and serve the people in power. In times like this, you can see the disparity between the rich and the poor. Jeff Bezos is probably going to be the first trillionaire, which shouldn't be a sentence that should ever be said.

"James Packer earns \$17 million just after he laid-off 10,000 staff, and his companies receive government coronavirus subsidies. I very much disagree with the system we have now. I believe that if people were more financially equal then things like this wouldn't happen and we wouldn't be out here."



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