

Proponents of racial politics react with hostility to multi-racial protests against police murder of George Floyd

Nick Barrickman
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The mass movement against police brutality that has erupted in the wake of the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis has exposed the reactionary and anti-working class character of racial politics.

The protests across the United States and internationally have been marked by their multi-racial and multi-ethnic character. They have demonstrated the profound commitment of the broad mass of working people and youth to the fight against racism and the defense of democratic rights. They have also evinced the popular hatred, not only of Trump, but of the entire capitalist system.

However, the sight of hundreds of thousands of young people and workers, white and black, marching side by side to demand an end to police brutality and racial discrimination has terrified Democratic Party officials and their black nationalist allies.

In a particularly vile comment in the *Nation*, titled “There’s Only One Possible Conclusion: White America Likes Its Killer Cops,” Elie Mystal, the publication’s “justice correspondent,” stated on May 27: “The police are never going to voluntarily stop killing black and brown people. The killings will continue until the majority of white people in this country make the killings stop.”

He adds: “The police work for white people, and they know it. White people know it too. Deep down, white people know exactly whom the police are supposed to protect and serve, and they damn well know it’s not black and brown people.”

Mystal blames “white people” for racist police killings. It is their active or tacit support for murderous cops that is supposedly responsible for deadly police violence.

Similarly, Ibram Kendi, a professor at American University and author of *How to Be an Anti-Racist*, declared yesterday, “We have so many Americans drenched in racist ideas and the racist ideas prevent them from knowing they are drenched, prevent them from knowing racist power is raining racist ideas on their heads.”

This is not only a slander against the vast majority of white workers and youth, who oppose racism and are appalled by police killings, it also obscures the real source of racism and police violence in general—the capitalist system and its state apparatus.

The police are not just any group of people, and they do not represent any one race. The police are an arm of the capitalist state, the “special bodies of armed men” that defend the property, wealth and power of the corporate-financial ruling class by suppressing the opposition of the working class to exploitation and social inequality. They are recruited from among the most backward layers of society and indoctrinated in contempt for working and poor people. Racism, long a tool of the capitalist class to divide the working class, is promoted among the armed enforcers of the oligarchs who rule society.

Statistics show that while a disproportionate number of African Americans are victims of police violence and murder, the majority of those killed by cops in the US are white. According to the online aggregator killedbypolice.net, of the 429 people shot and killed by police this year, over 170 of them are white, a plurality, while 88 are listed as black.

Others have sought to brand whites participating in protests as “outside agitators.” The *New York Times* staff journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones, the principal author of the discredited “1619 Project” released by the *Times* last summer, tweeted May 30 that “There are people in these uprisings taking advantage of black pain to mete out destruction. We as journalists have deeper stories to tell.”

Later, Hannah-Jones specified that the “people” she was referring to were white. “White protesters tearing up black cities is not allyship,” she wrote.

The “1619 Project” sought to present all of US history as the struggle of black people against racism, which is embedded “in the DNA” of “white” America. In the course of this historical falsification, Hannah-Jones portrayed the

American Revolution as a conspiracy of slaveholders to preserve chattel slavery against British moves to abolish it, denounced Lincoln as a racist, and ignored the fact that slavery was abolished through a Civil War in which hundreds of thousands of whites died.

At a press conference late last month, called to announce the imposition of a curfew, Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan, Police Chief James Craig and a number of so-called “activists” decried the presence of “suburbanites” (that is, youth from predominantly white areas outside of Detroit) in multi-racial protests held over that weekend.

Speaking from the panel, Raymond Winans, the CEO of “Keeping Them Alive,” denounced the “suburbanites” who “infiltrate our city” to riot and loot. Decrying attempts to “destroy the system” and professing his “love” for the police department, he declared, “We can never sell out but we are going to cash in.”

In an interview on NBC’s “Meet the Press” May 31, Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms denounced the “very diverse crowd” that had shown up to protest police brutality the day before in her city. “What I know in Atlanta is that this protest, even from a physical standpoint, didn’t look like our normal protests,” she complained.

The Democratic Party officials and black nationalists who are attacking the protests on racial grounds, often with the same language as the Trump administration, are aiding the efforts of police to repress and shut them down. Workers and young people who support the call to end police brutality should ask themselves: “Whose interests are these forces serving?”

The emergence of a mass multi-racial movement against police brutality and racism poses a threat to the entire political system in the United States. For the past 50 years, the ruling class, politically through the Democratic Party but also through the media and academia, has promoted racial politics in an attempt to divide the working class and obscure the more fundamental class issues that dominate capitalist society.

It has elevated a layer of blacks into the administration of cities and, with Obama, into the White House, and cultivated a narrow layer of upper-middle-class and bourgeois African Americans in positions of corporate power, in the police, the military and other institutions of the capitalist state. Racial and identity politics have become an ideological and political pillar of capitalist rule.

None of this has lessened the poverty and oppression faced by the vast majority of the African American population. On the contrary, the addition of more blacks to police departments, in the halls of Congress and on Wall Street has gone hand in hand with a worsening of the economic and social conditions of black workers and youth.

Wealth stratification between the richest and poorest members of the African American population is among the starkest in the developed world. According to statistics from 2017, the top 10 percent of the African American population controls over 75 percent of all the wealth owned by African Americans, while the bottom 50 percent of African Americans possess negative or no wealth. Inequality skyrocketed during the presidency of Barack Obama, as the top 1 percent of African Americans doubled their share of wealth from 19.4 percent to 40.5 percent.

Throughout the population, social inequality has grown explosively. America is an oligarchic society, and such a society is incompatible with democratic rights.

As inequality and poverty have become starker, the brutality of the police has increased. Over the past several decades, the police have been systematically militarized and turned into virtual death squads occupying working class communities.

The Obama administration expanded police militarization through programs such as the Department of Defense’s 1033 program. This program delivers “excess” military-grade weaponry to police departments. As of 2015, it had delivered over \$5.1 billion in weapons from the military to domestic law enforcement. This has only been expanded during Trump’s presidency.

The promoters of racial politics express the interests of a wealthy and privileged layer that has benefited from the growth of social inequality and the impoverishment of the working masses. This layer, part of the richest 10 percent, has a vested interest in defending the capitalist system. It seeks merely a bigger portion of the wealth monopolized by the top five percent and one percent for itself. It is terrified of the development of a mass united movement of the working class against the capitalist system, which is why it lines up, objectively, on the opposite side of the barricades from the working class, black as well as white.



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