

A timeline of abuse by the New York Police Department

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11 June 2020

The following is a reconstruction of events that took place in the Bronx over the evening of June 4 into the morning of June 5 based on an interview with Rips, a recent college graduate who was arrested at the protest. The events of the evening were later described by New York City police commissioner Dermot Shea as “executed nearly flawlessly.”

Rips, originally from San Diego, attended the Bronx protest with her boyfriend George, who is a restaurant worker originally from New Orleans, and with two other friends. Despite having committed no crime, the couple were held overnight in Queens and Bronx precincts respectively. Following their arrest, Rips and George shared their story on social media. This led to thousands of dollars of donations overnight. Despite the arrest, the young couple has continued to support and take part in the ongoing protests against police violence throughout New York City.

7:00 p.m.:

“We arrived in the Bronx at around 7 p.m. and right out of the station we found the protest. I was struck by who was present, there were lots of young people and also a lot of healthcare workers. Most striking was that the protesters were from all kinds of backgrounds. I’ve been at protests every day since they started in New York and although I’d seen some tension, I had no idea of how dangerous this was about to get.”

7:30 p.m.:

The group began walking south until it reached around 136th Street. “Out of nowhere, a group of around 50 fully armored police officers on bikes started to surround us. We turned around but there was this wall of officers in full riot gear. They started to close us in, they kettled us in like you see in videos of protesters online. We tried to escape but they blocked off every way out. While they were closing in someone pointed to the top of a high-rise building on the street, there was a sniper up there watching over us. We looked around and they had snipers on every roof. This police helicopter was also coming lower and lower overhead. People realized they couldn’t get out, so we started to chant ‘Let us go’ and ‘We are peaceful, what are you?’ over and over.”

7:45 p.m.:

Rips, corroborated by other reports on social media, told the WSWs that the New York Police Department (NYPD) started their attack before the citywide 8 p.m. curfew.

“On one side the cop-bikers put their bicycles together in a wall pushing us in closer and closer. One cop bashed his bike against my boyfriend’s leg. He couldn’t get treatment until the next day and he’s got an infection now. Once the protesters were tightly squeezed together the cops started to throw tear gas and mace. There were children in the crowd, and you could hear them screaming.

“People started to shout, ‘I can’t breathe.’ This kid next to me looked like he was beginning to faint. The tear gas was so strong, breathing was really hard. We started to see the police move in around us and my boyfriend grabbed hold of me...Then this captain, I remember he had a bright white shirt in the middle of the smog, pushed him to the ground so hard so he couldn’t hold on, and then another grabbed me and handcuffed

me from behind. The last time I saw George he was being beaten down by a group of officers, I was so scared for him. I didn’t find out he was safe until the next afternoon.

“I was shocked at their [police] violence. It was like the red mist descended, they were just hitting everyone, men, women, children, black, white, brown, it didn’t matter who you were they were just coming for you because you were protesting. I just remember that the police looked like they were really enjoying it. There were cops shaking with excitement who just couldn’t wait to get in on the action.”

8:00 p.m.:

Rips described how when the protesters were handcuffed in zip ties, they were lined up along the sidewalk with their arms behind their backs.

“All of the kids around me were in a lot of pain, they put our arms in this position to deliberately hurt us, and the zip ties were so tight I could see everyone’s hands going purple. While I was being arrested the officer pulled off my mask. Then they had us lined up on the sidewalk and were taking pictures with us like we were trophy animals.” At no point during the evening was Rips, or anyone else she saw get arrested, read their Miranda rights or allowed access to a phone.

9:00 p.m.:

After an hour on the sidewalk the protesters were loaded onto corrections buses. While 20 to 25 men were pushed into the back of the bus, Rips and three other women were forced into a separate section.

“There were four of us. We were pushed into netted metal cages. They were so small I couldn’t stand up without hitting my head. I couldn’t even put my arms out in front of me. I was crammed in with three other girls for over four hours. The guys in the back of the bus kept pleading with the police officers to at least let the girls out. It was also insanely hot. The girl in front of me had been struck with a billy club on the head and her wound was open. She passed out at least once.

“There was this one officer called Nixon, he kept coming up to us and mocking us, saying that these little holes were the only air we deserve. He was black and I was kind of shocked to see a black officer be so aggressive and violent towards protestors who were outraged at the killing of a black man [George Floyd].”

The bus drove its passengers from the Bronx to the Kew Gardens precinct in Queens for processing. The passengers were left in the bus without air conditioning, water, or medical treatment for their injuries for four hours.

June 5

1:00 a.m.:

The bus began to be unloaded and the protesters were forced to line up outside. In the early hours of the morning, the New York area was hit by substantial rainfall.

“They held us in the pouring rain for another three hours. I was only wearing a tank top. They said we had to wait outside while they cleared the cells for us. I went from being so hot in the bus that I felt like I couldn’t breathe, to being freezing. We were all shaking, still in our zip-

tie handcuffs. There was some scaffolding by the precinct that the police officers were using to stay dry. We asked the officers if we get out of the rain and line up under the cover, but they said we had to stay where we were.”

3:00 a.m.:

Rips told the WSWs about one particularly disturbing incident. After two hours of standing in the rain, and at least seven without water, the protesters lined up were trying to drink the rainwater to quench their thirst.

“One protester told an officer that in her backpack there were a few bottles of water and asked if they could be shared among all of us. So, the cop went and got the bag and opened it up. He grabbed a bottle and opened it as if he was about to hand it to us, but then he just stared straight at us and started to pour all of it out onto the street.”

4:00 a.m.:

An hour after this incident, the NYPD finally allowed the lined-up protesters to come inside.

“They took us to the basement cells that were covered in mold. I was put in a cell with around thirty other women. It was so cold down there we had to huddle to keep warm. My boyfriend told me later that in the Bronx they kept it really hot in his cell. Whatever they did, they weren’t going to let us be comfortable for one second.

“They made us take our shoes off before we entered the cells. In mine, there were no bathroom facilities we could use. A couple of women in the cell had to pee on the floor. Some of the women were even menstruating and asked the female guards if they could get some sanitary products. Their only response was to laugh at us and call us b**ches.

“I remember there was an anemic girl who was put in a cell by herself. I was worried about her. I think the police singled her out because she told them to stop lying when they tried to claim another protestor’s empty metal water bottle could be classified as a weapon.”

9:00 a.m.:

“They refused to tell us the time the whole night, but I think by around 9 a.m. they came around to give us some food. We were all really hungry and dehydrated, some people were even passing out again. They gave us the smallest apples I have ever seen, they were dirty as well, and a little piece of moldy bread.”

11:00 a.m.:

The excuse given by the NYPD officers for the delays in processing were that only one computer at the precinct was working. Nonetheless, by around 11 a.m. all but four of the protesters had been released. Rips was one of the ones to remain inside.

“I think they kept the loudest of us in there for an hour longer than anyone else. I was eventually charged with a Class D misdemeanor. Most people got summons but they just randomly selected some of us in the lineup to get misdemeanors. I now have to attend a court date in October, with potential prison time and a \$3,000 fine. I don’t have \$3,000, I have no idea what I am going to do if they fine me and then there’s the risk I am going to go to prison for peacefully protesting, I can’t believe it!”

2:30 p.m.:

Nineteen hours after heavily armed officers began surrounding the group of peaceful protesters, Rips was finally released. She was welcomed by a jail support team as she left Kew Gardens precinct.

“There were lawyers there who helped me understand what had just happened and how they could help me challenge the charges. The most important thing was that there was food and water. Someone there even drove me home. All for free. These teams are so important, I was so desperate and confused when I left but they were so supportive and managed to calm me down.”

On the afternoon of June 5, Rips and her boyfriend soon shared their experiences on social media, leading to donations from across the world of over \$4,000. Rips and her boyfriend used part of the money to help support other protesters by providing medical equipment such as gauzes, Band-Aids, gauzes, antiseptics, masks, hand sanitizer, and eye drops.

“My boyfriend works in a small café and we called his boss to ask if we could use their kitchen to make sandwiches for the protesters. He agreed so we put a call out on social media for people to come and help package the equipment and make the sandwiches. The response was amazing. People I have never met showed up, people I knew from way back who I never thought cared about politics even came. That day we had thirty people helping us.”

Fearing a repeat of the events of the night of June 4, Rips has restricted her involvement in protests to the distribution of aid and food to other protesters. Nonetheless, two days after her arrest she described being “stiff with fear” as she saw two NYPD officers pointing to her and staring threateningly as she distributed sandwiches. WSWs asked Rips why she continued to protest and what she thought of calls from the Democratic Party to enact “transformational” and “systemic” police reform.

“The police system goes hand in hand with the capitalist system, minority communities are deliberately left underfunded. They want to divide us. They want us to think we don’t like each other and fear each other, and the people are not letting that happen right now. I have seen every type of person in these protests, not just students, not just brown and black, all types are saying enough is enough.

“I used to be a democrat and a liberal, but now I don’t believe in these parties. People at the protest were shouting ‘f*ck Trump’, but also f*ck Biden. They are all slaves to capitalism until that changes politics will never work. Democrats are still capitalists. People like de Blasio show this. For all his talk he is still a slave to capitalism. Even the mayor in Minneapolis [Jacob Frey] showed he couldn’t detach from the system.”



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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The unity of international protesters and sympathizers