Millions across the US mark twenty-fifth day of mass demonstrations against police violence

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Millions of people protested across the US on Friday, the twenty-fifth day in a row, against police violence and for equality in demonstrations, marches and rallies that also celebrated Juneteenth, the date in 1865 that the last slaves in the Confederacy were freed, nearly two-and-a-half years after Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation had gone into effect.

With hundreds more events scheduled for Saturday and Sunday, this weekend could see the largest demonstrations held yet in the more than three weeks of protests that erupted in cities and towns in the US following the murder of 46-year-old African American man George Floyd by a white Minneapolis police officer on Memorial Day.

The corporate media, the Democratic Party and organizations within the periphery of the Democrats are continuing to inject racial identity politics into the mass movement that has erupted in the US and around the world, insisting that the cause of police violence is anti-black racism within the majority white American population.

However, within the racially and ethnically integrated protests—many of which are made up of a majority of white people in small towns and rural areas in every corner of the country—the demand for universal equality continues to predominate.

Thousands of people marched and rallied in eighteen scheduled events in all five boroughs of New York City on Friday, beginning with a rally at Washington Square Park in Manhattan at 10:00 AM. According to the *New York Times*, "Other throngs, unswayed by the steamy summertime weather, stopped and gathered near City Hall, in Harlem and at Cadman Plaza Park in Brooklyn Heights."

The gathering at Cadman Plaza was a convergence point for multiple crowds of thousands of people in Brooklyn, who then marched as one mass across the Brooklyn Bridge into Manhattan, shutting down one of the roadways on the bridge.

The protesters converged in the evening in Central Park for a mass rally, the first time that all of the different protest groups have come together in New York City. The *Times* also reported, "In the early afternoon, a motorcade made up of dozens of vehicles, some scrawled with slogans like 'Black Lives Matter' and 'Happy Juneteenth,' made its way from Grand Army Plaza in Brooklyn across the East River to Manhattan.

"When the caravan reached City Hall, drivers of all races raised their fists and honked their horns at a crowd holding signs reading 'Stop Police Crimes' and listening to Nina Simone's voice over a loudspeaker."

In an effort to adapt themselves to the mass movement, Democratic Governor of New York Andrew Cuomo signed an executive order making Juneteenth a paid holiday for state employees and Democratic Mayor of New York City Bill de Blasio announced that June 19 will become an official holiday in the city.

The Juneteenth celebrations originated from the arrival of Union troops into the city of Galveston, Texas—near the Gulf Coast border with Louisiana—and the announcement on June 19, 1865 by General Gordon Granger of federal orders proclaiming that all slaves were free.

Although Lincoln had issued his presidential proclamation freeing slaves in the rebellious states on September 22, 1862, and it went into effect on January 1, 1863, Texas was the most remote of the Confederacy and it took Union troops two months after the end of the Civil War to arrive their and enforce the executive order.

In Washington, DC, numerous rallies and marches took place on Friday within the capital and in the surrounding communities to the northeast in Maryland and southwest in Virginia. With thousands of people converging on the capital, DC police have for the third weekend in a row shut down streets and announced restrictions on specific locations in the downtown area.

The *Washington Post* reported, "Police said intermittent closures are possible Friday, Saturday and Sunday as needed, although day-long closures weren't expected. In the downtown area, street closures are possible south of L Street NW, roughly between 18th and 12th streets NW. South of E Street on and near the Mall, the closures roughly extend to Independence Avenue SW between 17th and Third streets."

Despite storm clouds and rain, the protests went ahead with hundreds marching down 14th Street NW and protesters assembling at the Lincoln Memorial to mark "Freedom Day", another popular name for Juneteenth. Hundreds also gathered at Meridian Hill Park, also known as Malcom X Park, and marched down 15th Street NW and then turned onto U Street and went to the office of Democratic DC Mayor Muriel Bowser.

Early in the morning, a longstanding monument to the segregationist and founding owner of the Washington Redskins NFL football team, George Preston Marshall, was dismantled and removed from the grounds of RFK Stadium. The *Post* reported, "The action followed years of lobbying by local residents who objected to memorializing an owner who opposed desegregation. It

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was taken down by Events DC, the city's convention and sports authority that manages and is currently redeveloping the 190-acre RFK campus that served as the Redskins' game-day home from 1961 to 1996."

On the west coast, thousands of protesters marched and were joined by longshoremen in the San Francisco Bay Area, shutting down the Port of Oakland, as part of the closure of 29 West Coast ports.

An indication of the concern within the official American political establishment about the racially integrated, spontaneous protests made up largely of young people, the Port of Oakland rally was addressed by the former Communist Party USA leader Angela Davis with the support of union bureaucrats. The "stop work meeting" by the longshoremen had been carried out with the support of the corporate Pacific Maritime Association and was included in the ILWU-PMA contract.

As reported by the San Jose *Mercury News*, "Addressing a crowd of a few thousand from her dark grey Mini Cooper, activist, college professor and philosopher Angela Davis praised the International Longshore and Warehouse Union for their port work stoppage. She spoke from her car wearing a mask to maintain social distance, and union leaders monitored the crowd to make sure participants kept on their masks. 'We are still on the long road to freedom,' she said. 'Whenever the ILWU takes a stand, the world feels the reverberations.'"

Many other protests took place in the Bay Area, including a youth rally outside the Santa Clara County building against the incarceration of young people, a march by a crowd of protesters down Broadway to city hall in Oakland and a rally in front of city hall in San Jose.

In Louisville, Kentucky, Democratic Mayor Greg Fischer was eager to participate in a virtual panel discussion on Friday morning with activists to mark Juneteenth, given the growing anger of residents and protesters nationally over the brutal murder of Breonna Taylor more than three months ago by three police officers.

By noon Mayor Fischer had announced that one of the three Louisville Metropolitan Police Department officers, Brett Hankison, was being fired. The *Louisville Courier-Journal* reported, "Hankison is accused by the department's interim chief, Robert Schroeder, of 'blindly' firing 10 rounds into Taylor's apartment, creating a substantial danger of death and serious injury."

The other two LMPD officers—Sgt. Jonathan Mattingly and Officer Myles Cosgrove—also fired their weapons into Taylor's apartment, but remain on administrative reassignment.

Sam Aguiar, attorney for the family of Taylor, told the *Courier Journal*, "It's about damn time," that Hankison was fired and that the characterization of the officer "blindly" firing into her apartment is accurate. "In fact, the ten rounds you fired were into a patio door and window which were covered with material that completely prevented you from verifying any person as an immediate threat or more importantly any innocent persons present," Aguiar said.

Taylor, who was 26 years old and a front line emergency medical tech worker when she was killed on March 13, was shot eight times and died on the floor of her apartment after the three officers serving a "no-knock" warrant broke down her door and started shooting.

Multiple protests also took place on Friday in Dallas, Texas to mark Juneteenth and protest police violence. A group of protesters demanding equality rallied outside of City Hall while carrying 239 yellow umbrellas, each one with the name of an individual killed by police violence. The marchers were met on the city hall plaza by over 400 bikers from dozens of North Texas motorcycle clubs.

The *Dallas Morning News* also reported, "Soon after, about 350 protesters representing nine Greek Life organizations commenced a 2 1/2-mile march from Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. to City Hall, collecting additional marchers joining along the way despite 90-degree temps."

Marches, rallies, sit-ins and a "virtual gamer gathering" were organized in Atlanta, Georgia on Friday with thousands taking to the streets in the metropolitan area. Protesters gathered at Centennial Olympic Park and at the Wendy's where Rayshard Brooks was shot and killed by an Atlanta police officer last Friday.

The officer who shot Brooks, Garrett David Rolfe, was fired and then charged with felony murder and other charges on Thursday. The *Atlanta Journal Constitution* reported that Rolfe, who faces charges which could bring the death penalty or life in prison, will have a bond hearing on Tuesday.

A CNN report said that a majority of Atlanta police officers scheduled to work in two of the city's six police zones, did not report to work on Friday to protest the charges against Rolfe. CNN reported, "The Atlanta Police Department denied officers weren't showing up for their shifts, but a police union director backed the accounts by CNN sources. In some instances, officers were refusing to leave their precincts unless a fellow officer required backup."

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