

Protests across the US against whitewash of Breonna Taylor murder met with police repression

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For the second night in row, thousands of youth and workers defied police attacks and threats by far-right militias to take part in multiracial and multiethnic protests in major US cities in response to the whitewash of the police murder of Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Kentucky.

Protests erupted Wednesday across the country following the announcement by Kentucky Attorney General Daniel Cameron that there would be no charges against the cops who barged into the home of the 26-year-old African American woman in the early morning hours of March 13 and shot her dead.

Cameron claimed the killing of Taylor was “justified” because her boyfriend, Kenneth Walker, had fired first, injuring one of the police in the leg. Walker insists that he had no idea that the two armed men, in plain clothes, who tore down the door and invaded the apartment in the dead of night were police officers. Thinking he and Taylor were being attacked, he fired in self-defense.

The clear message from the Kentucky grand jury and Cameron is that police have a license to use any amount of deadly force they wish if they meet with resistance to a violent intrusion into a worker’s home.

On Thursday, demonstrators marched in over a dozen cities. In virtually every case they were met with brutal repression at the hands of the police, in some cases backed up by National Guard troops and nighttime curfews.

At his press conference on Wednesday, Cameron, an African American Republican, who spoke last month at the Republicans’ fascistic National Convention, announced that a grand jury had brought no charges against officers Myles Cosgrove and Jon Mattingly, who fired a combined 22 bullets, six of which hit Taylor, an emergency medical technician. The cops then failed to call for emergency medical help for some 20 minutes while the young woman succumbed to her wounds.

The only charges laid were against fired detective Brett Hankison, who was charged with reckless endangerment for

wildly firing 10 bullets into Taylor’s apartment from outside, some of which went into the next apartment, where a couple and their child were sleeping. Hankison has already been released on bail and faces a maximum of 15 years in prison if convicted.

The city of Louisville remains under a 9 p.m. to 6:30 a.m. curfew, imposed by Democratic Mayor Greg Fischer, who announced on Thursday that the curfew would be extended throughout the weekend. Hundreds of National Guard soldiers and riot police remain deployed throughout the city. Military Humvees and BearCat armored police trucks have cordoned off intersections around the downtown courthouse and police station.

Demonstrating the bipartisan ruling-class commitment to quashing any form of dissent or resistance to the state’s “right” to murder workers and their family members whenever they feel “threatened,” Kentucky’s Democratic governor, Andy Beshear, confirmed in a Thursday press conference that President Donald Trump had called him after two Louisville Metro Police Department (LMPD) officers were shot Wednesday night. According to Beshear, Trump offered assistance, which was warmly received.

“It was a good call. I appreciate him making it,” Beshear said. The governor said he assured Trump “that we had things under control... we have the appropriate levels of law enforcement or peacekeepers.”

Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden likewise solidarized himself with the police, tweeting out his “prayers” for the injured officers while threatening to hold “accountable” those protesters who engage in “violence.”

On Thursday morning, the LMPD announced it had made 127 arrests. Among those detained were journalists Shelby Talcott and Jorge Ventura. The two are employed by the right-wing Tucker Carlson-funded *Daily Caller*. According to editor-in-chief Geoffrey Ingersoll, both Talcott and Ventura are being charged with two misdemeanors for breaking curfew and unlawful assembly, after allegedly

failing to sequester themselves in a predetermined “observation area.”

The US Press Freedom Tracker, which collates instances of First Amendment violations around the country, has confirmed “at least a dozen press freedom violations,” including six arrests related to protests that began Wednesday evening and continued into Thursday morning. Online video recordings show police assaulting journalists in Louisville, Portland, Oregon and Los Angeles, making it “one of the most aggressive nights since federal officers largely left Portland in mid-August,” according to the press freedom organization.

The US Press Freedom Tracker has confirmed over 115 arrests and 207 physical attacks against journalists since the beginning of the year. Out of the 207 physical attacks against journalists, 141, or nearly 75 percent of all assaults, have been committed by police.

Gun-toting members of the Oath Keepers, a far-right militia composed of thousands of ex-military and ex-law enforcement officials, were allowed to “patrol” the streets of Louisville, menacing protesters after curfew. The cordial attitude of police to the far-right hate group was reminiscent of the treatment Kenosha, Wisconsin police displayed last month when interacting with Kenosha Guard militia members. They included Kyle Rittenhouse, a 17-year-old Trump supporter who murdered two protesters, 26-year-old Anthony Huber and 36-year-old Joseph Rosenbaum, and injured a third, 22-year-old Gaige Grosskreutz.

Two separate instances of vehicular assaults were reported at protests in Denver, Colorado and Buffalo, New York, which left two protesters with minor injuries.

Vehicular assaults have been promoted in far-right circles, and by police chiefs across the country, as acceptable, with police rarely charging the drivers with any crime. This was the case in Denver, where a man was briefly detained by police before being released without charges after he drove his vehicle through protesters who had gathered outside the state capitol building. The driver initially stopped when confronted by the protesters, who advised the vehicle to turn around. Instead, the driver accelerated, hitting one person and continuing to flee before he was pulled over by police.

In Buffalo, a woman is still recovering after breaking several bones when a king-cab pickup truck drove directly into a group of protesters. People on the scene told reporters the driver was shouting racial slurs as she accelerated through the crowd and sped away. As of this writing, no charges have been announced against the driver.

Protests were held in several cities Thursday night, with more planned tonight and throughout the weekend. In New York City, thousands marched for hours with no arrests reported. As of this writing, protests were ongoing in all five

boroughs.

In Seattle, Washington, 13 protesters were arrested during protests. No police have been arrested after a chilling video was uploaded depicting a still unidentified Seattle Police Department officer running over an injured protester’s head with his bicycle while the victim was lying on the street. After a public outcry, the Seattle police released a statement that the officer had been put on administrative leave while the city “investigated.”

In Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Atlanta, Georgia, police fired chemical agents at protesters who had gathered to demand justice for Breonna Taylor. Signs read, “She. Was. Sleeping.”, as well as, “The only cop who was charged was the one who didn’t shoot her.” At least 11 were arrested in Atlanta.

In Las Vegas, Nevada, six protesters were arrested Wednesday night after more than 150 demonstrators marched through downtown. Protests continued Thursday with at least another 100 protesters gathered on the Strip, as of this writing.

Protests and vigils in support of Taylor were also held in Cincinnati, Ohio; Madison, Wisconsin; Chicago, Illinois; the District of Columbia; Asheville, North Carolina; San Diego and Los Angeles, California and Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota.

Preliminary numbers indicate that at least 150 to 200 people were arrested on Thursday.

Workers and youth must take stock of the last four months of protests, which began with the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. The experience has shown that despite determined, courageous and peaceful protests, the police, the armed servants of the state, cannot be reformed.

They are the frontline defenders of capital and wealth against the working class. The ongoing violence and killing perpetrated by the police, with the aid of their fascist sympathizers, is the response by the ruling class to the growth of opposition within the working class and youth not only to police violence and racism, but to all of the expressions of capitalist oppression, exploitation and violence. These have been compounded by the ruling elite’s homicidal response to the coronavirus pandemic, spearheaded by the Trump administration’s back-to-work and back-to-school drives, which are supported in practice by the Democratic Party.



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