

Demonstrations against police violence continue in Washington D.C., federal agents target Philadelphia teacher for protesting

Jacob Crosse
30 October 2020

Four police officers involved in the killing of 20-year-old Karon Hylton-Brown in Washington D.C. have been placed on paid leave, as protests continued near the 4th District police station for the third night in a row Thursday. Hylton-Brown, a recent father, was being pursued by multiple police vehicles for allegedly not wearing a helmet while riding his scooter on October 23 before he crashed into a civilian vehicle. He was transported to the hospital and put on life support before passing away on Monday.

Hylton-Brown's death came on the same day 27-year-old Uber Eats driver, aspiring rapper, and newlywed, Walter Wallace Jr., was murdered by two, still publicly unnamed Philadelphia police officers, who have since been relegated to desk duty. The killing and subsequent release of a social media video showing Wallace's last moments prompted an outpouring of anger in the impoverished West Philadelphia neighborhood, leading to two nights of protests in which several hundred people marched in the streets and clashed with police.

The heinous shooting of yet another person suffering a mental health crisis, who constitute nearly a quarter of all fatal police shootings in the last five years, and the subsequent outpouring of anger by the Philadelphia community have been seized upon by President Donald Trump to justify the deployment of state and local, as well as federal, paramilitary forces ahead of the election.

The deployment of federal troops and the whipping up of fascist militias throughout the country is part of Trump's strategy to subvert the election results and remain in power should he lose. To give the appearance of legality, Trump will rely on the support of the Supreme Court, and the newly appointed justice Amy

Coney Barrett, a former clerk to arch-reactionary Justice Antonin Scalia, to rubber stamp his coup.

In response to Trump's threats to subvert the election, the Democratic Party is simply urging people to vote, while Trump prepares to deploy federal agents, as he did in Portland and Seattle earlier this year. In Pennsylvania, the Democrats as they did in response to police brutality in Minnesota and Wisconsin earlier this year, have taken it upon themselves to empower the oppressive arm of the state.

Five people were arrested on Wednesday night for violating a curfew that was imposed by Democratic Mayor Jim Kenney. The curfew has since been lifted. However, this does not mean a lessening of militarized oppression. On Wednesday, Democratic Governor Tom Wolf signed a proclamation of disaster emergency which authorized millions of dollars for the police and National Guard. Despite scant protests in the city Wednesday night and Thursday, National Guard soldiers are still en route and set to deploy throughout the city beginning on Friday and into Saturday.

After perfunctory expressions of sympathy by Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, the Democrats shifted quickly to denouncing protesters for engaging in "violence" and "looting." Due to the shared social interests they represent, the Democratic Party, a party of Wall Street, war and CIA, is unwilling and unable to defend workers' interests and lives. After spending Wednesday mimicking Trump's demands for "law and order," Biden has seemingly dropped the matter entirely, releasing no new statements.

There are several unanswered questions pertaining to the murder of Wallace. His family has maintained from the outset that when they called emergency services on

Monday, they specifically requested an ambulance to assist with Wallace, who suffered from bipolar disorder and was taking lithium. The family has also stated that police were called to the residence three times in total that day and multiple times within the last year. There is no doubt that the police officers who shot Wallace that day knew who he was prior to arriving on the scene with guns drawn.

Meanwhile, protesters affiliated with the Black Lives Matter movement in D.C. have claimed that over 200 unarmed protesters and community members have been injured by police during protests on Tuesday and Wednesday night. Several demonstrators claimed that police purposefully kettled protesters before deploying percussion grenades, foam-baton rounds, and pepper spray.

Along with demonstrators, independent journalists and even children who were attempting to avoid the protests by hiding in a nearby McDonald's were subjected to pepper spray.

The D.C. Metropolitan police department released footage on Thursday which corroborates what witnesses and the family have stated. The officers, in apparent violation of their own policy of not pursuing someone if the alleged offense is a mere traffic violation, were chasing Hylton-Brown for several minutes. While the state released a short dash cam video which shows the moment of the accident, security footage taken from a home prior to the crash shows police chasing him for several minutes beforehand.

The officer leading the pursuit and driving behind Hylton-Brown has been identified by the community and confirmed by Democratic Mayor Muriel Bowser as Terrance Sutton. Bowser has declined to name the other officers involved in the pursuit pending the completion of the official cover-up. Sutton was named in a D.C. American Civil Liberties Union lawsuit earlier this year for his role in an unconstitutional search and sexual assault and is well-known in the working class community he patrols as an aggressive sadist with a history of abusing young black working class men like Karon.

While federal paramilitaries, such as BORTAC agents and US marshals have yet to be ordered by Trump into Pennsylvania, federal forces are still targeting protest leaders in an attempt to snuff out

dissent to unending police murder.

On Thursday a federal indictment was unsealed that includes arson charges against a well-known West Philadelphia activist and social studies teacher, Anthony Smith. It alleges that Smith, along with two other men, were responsible for allegedly setting fires during George Floyd protests on May 30, 2020 that led to the destruction of a police cruiser.

The sparse indictment, only six pages long, does not actually allege that Smith set anything on fire. However, that did not stop federal agents from raiding Smith's home early Wednesday morning and transporting him several hours away to the Allenwood Jail. In a statement released by supporters affiliated with Philly For REAL Justice, James Miles, a friend of Smith questioned the timing of, and the political motivations behind the arrest.

"After two nights of mass arrests and police brutality against community members calling for justice for Walter Wallace, seeing Federal charges brought against a movement leader like Anthony is sickening," said Miles. "All this makes you wonder. Is the Federal government arresting and charging movement leaders to try to scare the rest of us?"



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact