

Chicago mayor Lightfoot sought to block release of video of wrongful police raid

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On Monday night, CBS Chicago aired police bodycam footage from the brutal and illegal night-time police raid on the home of social worker Anjanette Young in February 2019. The Chicago Police Department (CPD), assisted by Democratic Mayor Lori Lightfoot and the city's lawyers, worked for months to cover up the raid and suppress the video, which further confirms that the police operate as a violent, occupying force in working class neighborhoods, unaccountable to even the most basic investigative and legal requirements.

The video of the raid on Young's apartment comes to light as Lightfoot, amid surging COVID-19 infections and deaths, is leading a homicidal campaign to reopen the Chicago Public Schools in less than one month.

In working to conceal the footage, Lightfoot follows in the Democratic Party tradition of her predecessor, former mayor Rahm Emanuel, and his predecessor Richard M. Daley. Emanuel's reign as mayor ended after footage of the 2014 police murder of 17-year-old Laquan McDonald came to light just over one year later. In the McDonald case, Emanuel, the city's legal team, and the city council worked to cover up the youth's brutal murder by police, buy the family's silence for \$5 million and suppress the release of the footage of the killing.

A former prosecutor, Lightfoot's role in city leadership prior to running for mayor was as a cleaner, covering up police criminality for Emanuel just before the McDonald murder came into public view. Brought on in 2015 to lead the Chicago Police Board, she was subsequently named chair of the Police Accountability Task Force, an appointment supposed to result in police reform.

The raid on Young's apartment occurred on February 21, 2019, when at least nine police officers with body

cameras battered down the door, bursting in on her with guns drawn and screaming at her to put her hands up. Immediately, the social worker, who was fresh from the shower and completely undressed, was handcuffed. Only after 13 degrading minutes, during which police made the barest and most pathetic attempts to cover her while her apartment was ransacked, was she allowed to get dressed, and handcuffed again.

As Young said to CBS, "It happened so fast, I didn't have time to put on clothes... I was just standing there. Terrified. Humiliated. Not even understanding why this was happening to me."

Despite Young's insistence, 43 times over the course of the video, that the police had made a mistake, officers kept her handcuffed for nearly 20 minutes. From beginning to end, the police treated her with total contempt. Refusing at first to produce a search warrant or even explain themselves, the heavily armed officers ignore Young's desperate plea for an explanation, even telling her, "You don't have to shout." Perhaps most disturbing is the large number of officers who simply stood waiting around her living room as she stood there naked and handcuffed.

As it turned out, Chicago police officers failed to conduct even the most elementary investigation when deciding to raid Young's apartment, which was next door to that of the man they wanted. Reports indicate he was actually wearing an electronic GPS monitoring device at the time of the raid and could have easily been located in police databases. Instead, officers based their application for a search warrant and the subsequent raid entirely on a tip from a police informant, who gave them the wrong address.

When it began to dawn on the police officers they were in the wrong place, they went outside to confer, turning off their bodycams. When the sergeant leading

the operation returned, he attempted to act as if nothing serious had happened, and officers absurdly attempted to repair the lock on Young's door before giving up and propping it shut with her belongings. After issuing a perfunctory apology, the sergeant assured Young, "The city will be in contact with you tomorrow."

Violating CPD policy requiring further verification of tips, police went ahead with the application for a search warrant, which was approved by an assistant state's attorney and a judge, despite the thin basis. However, as the CBS investigative report "[un]warranted" makes clear, Chicago police routinely fail to verify addresses before executing search warrants, leading to completely innocent working class families and individuals being terrorized on a regular basis.

Since the raid, Young has initiated a lawsuit against the city and police, claiming rightly that it constitutes a violation of the Fourth Amendment's ban on unlawful search and seizure. In the course of this suit, Young sought to obtain the video footage from the police body cameras and has been stonewalled every step of the way by the city's Law Department at the direction of Mayor Lightfoot, who took office May 2019.

Having initially refused requests by Young and CBS for the footage made under the Freedom of Information Act, the city only turned over the video as the result of Young's August 2019 lawsuit. The city tried to keep the video from becoming public through an order of confidentiality in February 2020. Even as CBS was to air the footage on Monday, city lawyers filed an emergency motion to block it, but were refused by a judge because CBS was not a party to the confidentiality agreement.

CBS argued the city was demanding "one of the most extraordinary forms of relief known in our jurisprudence—a prior restraint on a news report about a matter of public concern." The city's rationale was that CBS' previous reporting on the incident was "highly inaccurate and misleading" and that the video release would "paint an inaccurate picture of what happened during the subject search warrant."

The Lightfoot administration is reported to be pursuing sanctions against Young for violating the confidentiality order. Lightfoot said at a December 15 news conference, "There's allegations she violated that," but declined to comment further.

From the experiences of Young, the countless victims

of police violence, and the hundreds of thousands permitted to die and millions to be sickened in the 2020 pandemic, workers must draw the broadest political conclusions about the Democratic Party. In the immediate aftermath of the election of Lightfoot, the pseudoleft, including the leadership of the Chicago Teachers Union and the Democratic Socialists of America on the Chicago city council, promoted illusions in the new mayor as a figure open to progressive policies.

At every opportunity, Lightfoot has conducted herself as a brutish representative of the ruling class, absolutely contemptuous of the working class and democratic rights. From police crackdowns on protesters, savage cuts to the city budget, and a reckless school reopening plan, Lightfoot has proved the emptiness of any claims that a politician's race, gender or sexual orientation mean anything progressive when it comes to politics.



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