

Chicago releases video of police executing 13-year-old Adam Toledo

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On Thursday, the city of Chicago's Civilian Office of Police Accountability released video footage of the police execution of 13-year-old Adam Toledo on March 29.

In the shocking, violent footage, the youth is approached during a chase by Chicago Police Department (CPD) officer Eric Stillman, who ordered him to "show me your f*cking hands," an order with which he complied. As he turned, with his hands raised, to face the officer, Toledo was fatally shot in the chest.

The footage has been released at point of mounting social tensions in the United States. As more than half a million Americans have been killed in the COVID-19 pandemic, an unrelenting wave of police violence and protests continues, centered in the US's largest Democratic-led cities. Last week, 20-year-old Daunte Wright was murdered at a traffic stop just outside of Minneapolis, where the trial of Derek Chauvin for the 2020 murder George Floyd is ongoing.

The video of Toledo's murder once again confirms that police operate as death squads in working class neighborhoods across the US. According to the *Washington Post*, Toledo is among at least 265 people shot and killed by police this year and the third-youngest since the newspaper began tracking police killings.

On the night of the killing, officers responded within minutes to an alert from the audio surveillance system called Shotspotter. Far from carrying out any investigation to find out which crimes, if any, had occurred, officers immediately chased and violently confronted Toledo and 21-year-old Ruben Roman.

In the days after Toledo was killed, Cook County prosecutors and media figures, including liberal *Chicago Tribune* columnist Eric Zorn, sought to portray the 13-year-old as a hardened gang member and

suggested his killing was justified.

The police bodycam footage confirms that police and prosecutors had lied about the shooting and the threat Toledo posed. About an hour before the video was released to the public, local news station WGN reported that Cook County prosecutor James Murphy was wrong when he claimed during a bond hearing for 21-year-old Ruben Roman that Toledo was wielding a gun at the time he was shot.

A spokesperson for Cook County State's Attorney Kim Foxx, Sarah Sinovic, told *WGN Investigates*: "An attorney who works in this office failed to fully inform himself before speaking in court."

None of this prevented the *New York Times* and CNN from publishing statements to the contrary: "CNN teams have viewed the footage, which appears to show that less than one second passed between the time Adam Toledo draws a handgun and an officer fires a single, fatal shot that hits him in the chest."

The *Times* declared the following: "The video leaves significant questions about the sequence of events. ... As the officer, identified as Eric Stillman, fires a single shot, Adam is raising his arms and appears to be empty-handed."

Chicago's history of brutal, criminal policing is inextricably bound up with the Democratic Party's nine decades of rule. In their limitless hypocrisy, representatives of the Democratic Party establishment declared solidarity with the Toledo family and pledged accountability for the boy's death.

At a noon press conference Thursday, Mayor Lori Lightfoot called for calm ahead of the release of the video of the police murder. She said, "There are several videos that kind of start at the beginning of the episode, but watching the body cam footage which shows young Adam after he is shot is extremely difficult. I would

just say, and I've said this to a number of people on my staff...as a mom, this is not something you want children to see."

"There were a number of forces that met up at two-thirty in the morning on March 29 in an alley, and, simply put, we failed Adam," she said.

A former prosecutor, Lightfoot's role in city leadership prior to becoming mayor was as a cleaner for former Mayor Rahm Emanuel, covering up police criminality just before the 2014 murder of 17-year-old Laquan McDonald 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.

As she spearheaded a homicidal campaign to reopen Chicago Public Schools during the pandemic in winter—an agenda set by President Joe Biden—Lightfoot's administration worked to suppress police bodycam footage of a brutal and illegal nighttime police raid on the home of social worker Anjanette Young in February 2019. Young was forced to stand naked in her living room as policemen broke down the door and searched her home.

Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker issued a short statement in response to the release of the Toledo video, claiming, "Parents deserve neighborhoods that will nurture their kids. ... Adam Toledo, a 13-year-old child, was shot to death. This is a moment that calls for justice for our children and accountability in all our public institutions. The State of Illinois is committed to this work, whether it is transforming our justice system or investing in communities to create durable and long-term progress."

Every act of police violence testifies to the inequality that defines American society and further demonstrates that the capitalist class cultivates the police as a violent, occupying force in working class neighborhoods.

In covering up the basic role of police violence in enforcing class rule, Alderman Byron Sigcho Lopez, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America, tweeted that Toledo's murder was the consequence of problematic police training: "What we see is exactly what happens when police are taught that their lives matter more than anyone else's."

On Thursday afternoon, the city had deployed Department of Streets and Sanitation trucks to create

blockades in anticipation of protests. Earlier in the week, the city announced changes to its crowd control policy in anticipation of anti-police violence protests. The rules now reportedly require police commanders to consider "isolating specific violent or disruptive individuals" while allowing protests to go on, posing serious risks to those the police may target in demonstrations. Other elements of the policy include giving reasons for dispersing protests and refraining from commenting on protesters' views.

Last summer, Lightfoot raised the bridges into the downtown area of Chicago and cut off bus and train access to the city center for several days to keep protesters away from the wealthiest areas and limit looting.

Community and activist organizations in Chicago including Good Kids Mad City, Little Village Community Council, Chicago Freedom School, and Leadership Development for the Sustainable Self Determination of Little Village (LVEJO) plan a Friday demonstration at 5:30 p.m. in Logan Square Park.

The fight against police violence must be waged as a struggle of the working class against capitalism. Less than a year ago, a global wave of multiracial and multiethnic protests erupted against police violence following the release of the video of Floyd being murdered by Chauvin and his partners. Millions were outraged and disgusted and took to the streets in every state in the US and cities internationally in protest. Since then, millions around the world have been allowed to die in the COVID-19 pandemic to protect the interests of the financial aristocracy.

Opposition to the brutality of capitalist exploitation is growing internationally, and it must be united in a struggle for the socialist reorganization of society, including the dismantling of the bourgeoisie's military and police forces.



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