

Chicago police crack down on protests over police murder of 13-year-old Adam Toledo

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On Friday night, hundreds of demonstrators gathered in Logan Square Park on Chicago's Northwest Side to protest the killing of Adam Toledo, the 13-year-old boy who was fatally shot by Chicago cop Eric Stillman in the working class neighborhood of Little Village on the city's Southwest Side early in the morning on March 29.

Demonstrators marched en route to Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot's residence in the Logan Square neighborhood, which swelled to thousands. Police barricades set up near the mayor's home prevented the crowd from getting close and police made preparations to suppress demonstrations throughout the weekend and coming days.

In scenes reminiscent of the protests that unfolded across the US in the wake of the police murder of George Floyd last summer, police were caught on video brutally attacking peaceful protesters at the rally around 10 p.m. Friday night. A 20-second video posted on Twitter by BLMChicago shows officers manhandling protesters, wrestling some to the ground as they try to break free, and using batons to strike those who tried to help fellow demonstrators who had been pushed down by police.

Police arrested at least two non-violent participants in the demonstrations late Friday night. Twenty-year-old Anthony McCollum III was about to leave the protest at Logan Square Park when police began "pushing and hitting people with batons," according to McCollum's mother, Chicago Black Lives Matter executive director Amika Tendaji, who was beside him at the protest. Chicago police arrested McCollum on misdemeanor charges for reckless conduct, but Tendaji insisted he was "trying to shield and pull up people who fell to the ground," according to ABC7 News.

An 18-year-old Logan Square resident, Graham

Lefauve, was also arrested and charged with misdemeanor battery for spitting while "riding a bike past uniformed officers inside an unmarked police vehicle," according to the *Chicago Tribune*.

The ongoing protests are the expression of the outrage of the working class, youth and broader public to the April 15 release of police body camera footage of the murder of Toledo and the continuing epidemic of police violence against the working class and youth across the United States. The footage shows Stillman pursuing Toledo on foot in an alleyway in Little Village after responding to reports of shots fired in the neighborhood. In the video, Stillman shouts at Toledo to drop the gun he is holding in his hand.

After complying with Stillman's orders to "show me your f*cking hands," the footage shows Toledo unarmed with his hands raised turned to face Stillman. The officer shot him in the chest less than one second later. The boy immediately fell to the ground and was unresponsive to medical aid.

On Saturday, ABC7 Chicago reported that an attorney for the Cook County State's Attorney's Office had been placed on administrative leave Friday, following false statements in court that Toledo was holding a gun while shot—a statement that is blatantly contradicted by video evidence.

The false statements given by the State's Attorney's Office in court follow the narrative initially put forward by Mayor Lightfoot, a Democrat, at an April 5 press conference. "Let's be clear. An adult put a gun in a child's hand. A young and impressionable child. And one who should not have been provided with lethal force. A weapon that could and did irreparably change the course of his life."

Lightfoot's statements have a political purpose. Her attempt to somehow hold the 13-year-old responsible

for his own murder by police, before bodycam footage was released to the public, are a part of the Democratic Party's efforts to sweep police violence under the rug and promote the idea that reforms can address the epidemic of police violence which ravages working class communities.

The lies promoted by both Lightfoot and the State's Attorney's Office regarding the circumstances of the shooting show that the Democratic Party in Chicago, up to the highest level, will not critically address police violence in the city. Their false and misleading statements parroted the Chicago Police Department (CPD), whose tactical response report following the shooting claimed falsely that Toledo posed "imminent threat of battery with weapon" and "used force likely to cause death or bodily harm." The report, along with the video of the incident that exposes these false statements, is on file with the Chicago Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA).

Before the release of the videos on Thursday, Lightfoot defended Stillman at a news conference. She tried to cover up for the point-blank shooting of a 13-year-old, saying that footage showed "that officer spring into action to try to revive Adam, to call for medical assistance... I know most officers go through their whole career and they never fire their weapon in the line of duty... I also know that every time it happens, it's extraordinarily traumatizing for them. ... There are a lot of people who will probably be angry hearing me say that, but that is the fact."

Stillman's lawyer, Adam Grace, of law firm Grace and Thompson, has a history of defending Chicago police officers and the police union against misconduct charges. Grace told local news outlet Block Club Chicago, "I do not think he will be prosecuted for a crime, and I do believe that ... he will be exonerated of any type of a charge."

Lightfoot's track record of defending the police won her the support of the ruling class in the 2019 Chicago mayoral elections. The former prosecutor was appointed to lead the Chicago Police Board in 2015 and later became chair of the Police Accountability Task Force. Before that, she worked as a cleaner for the Democratic administration of former Chicago mayor Rahm Emanuel before her, suppressing the release of footage of the 2014 police shooting of 17-year-old Laquan McDonald.

Her 2019 mayoral campaign was propped up with the empty promise of police reform in a city where the poorest working class residents have been subjected to decade after decade of brutality at the hands of police. This promise proved to be an abject lie, as Lightfoot's administration actively sought to cover up the 2019 police raid on the home of social worker Anjanette Young. Young, who was not the subject of an investigation, was forced to stand naked and traumatized for minutes while cops searched her home, later revealing that they had the wrong address.

Stillman, the officer who killed Toledo, has had three misconduct complaints against him since he joined the CPD in 2015, two of which involve improper search, according to Invisible Institute, an investigative organization that tracks police misconduct. None of the complaints have resulted in disciplinary measures, which is par for the course for the majority of police misconduct allegations nationwide.

Members of Toledo's family are distraught after the release of the footage. His older brother, Marco Toledo, told ABC News that Adam was a loving and caring brother and cousin, and spoke out against the attempts to paint his brother "as a bad kid like everyone says he was."

"No matter what people say, kids will be kids and will make mistakes, but will learn from them—something my little brother didn't get the chance to do."



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