

Derek Chauvin found guilty of all charges in police murder of George Floyd

Trévon Austin
20 April 2021

Nearly eleven months after George Floyd was brutally murdered at the hands of Minneapolis, Minnesota police, former officer Derek Chauvin was found guilty Tuesday of second-degree murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter.

Chauvin's conviction was made possible because then 17-year-old Darnella Frazier used her phone to record as the officer pressed his knee into Floyd's neck for more than nine minutes, a horrific sight that exposed the brutal reality of police violence in the US for the whole world to see. If the infamous viral video had not captured the killing in excruciating detail, it is likely Floyd's death would have been covered up by police and ruled justified by state investigators, as hundreds of others are every year.

Given this undeniable evidence, the jury correctly ruled that Chauvin's actions constituted murder.

Millions of working people were horrified by Floyd's killing, seeing it as the embodiment of a reign of police terror that claims the lives of, on average, three people every single day in America.

But the mainstream media and high-ranking Democrats responded to the verdict by attempting to frame Floyd's murder entirely in racial terms. The killing of Floyd "ripped the blinders off for the whole world to see the systemic racism," Biden said at a press conference, calling American racism "a stain on our nation's soul."

The Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation released a statement saying, "We hope this guilty verdict begins to show that white supremacy will not win. White supremacy has no place in democracy, especially one that is supposed to guarantee us our freedom to live."

There is no denying that racism and other backward conceptions are promoted in the police. However, the attempt to make Chauvin's brutality the expression of a broader phenomenon of "white supremacy" serves to obscure the more fundamental reality that the case

exposed, and to shift responsibility from the capitalist state to the population as a whole.

Floyd's death ignited massive demonstrations across the globe. Protests emerged in over 2,000 cities and towns in over 60 countries. In the United States alone, an estimated 15 million to 26 million people participated in the demonstrations at some point, making them the largest in US history. Immediately after Floyd's death, the movement in his defense, and all others brutalized by police, assumed a multi-racial and multi-ethnic character. Workers from all backgrounds demanded an end to police killings.

Floyd's younger brother Rodney Floyd spoke to this universal sentiment at a press conference following the verdict. "This is a victory for all of us," Rodney declared. "There's no color barrier on this—this is for everyone who's been held down, pinned down."

The prosecution called multiple witnesses to recount their emotional response to seeing Floyd being murdered while they could only watch on. White and black witnesses alike expressed their anger over the senseless killing at the hands of police.

Jena Scurry, a white Minneapolis 911 dispatcher, told jurors she was so horrified by what she saw that she felt the need to call the police on the police. Genevieve Hansen, who is also white, identified herself as a paramedic as officers pinned Floyd to the ground. Hansen tearfully recalled how helpless she felt when police refused to let her give Floyd medical attention. Floyd's girlfriend, Courteney Ross, who is white, took the stand to review how the couple battled together against opioid addiction, an affliction which is tragically familiar to millions of Americans.

And a mixed-race jury, witnessing the evidence, quickly arrived at a correct verdict.

The unending wave of police violence and murder is an expression of the nature of the capitalist state, not "white

supremacy.” As the WSWWS noted in its perspective this week, police violence is directed against working people and youth of all racial and ethnic backgrounds. The majority of those killed by police are white, and most police killings go unreported in the media.

For years, the epidemic of police violence in America has surged in the face of protest and promises of reform. Since 2013, more than 1,000 people have been murdered by police each year, with an average of three killings every day. Only a minute fraction of the killings result in an officer being charged, and even fewer officers are ever convicted.

According to the Police Integrity Research Group, only 104 police officers have been arrested for murder or manslaughter resulting from an on-duty shooting from 2005 to 2019. Of those, only 35 were found guilty. During the same period, approximately 15,000 people were killed by police.

Just as Chauvin’s verdict was being announced, police murdered 15-year-old Ma’Khia Bryant in Columbus, Ohio. According to local news reports, Bryant lived in a foster home and got into an altercation with another staying at the home. Police were responding to a call that a female was trying to stab others. Police received the call at 4:35 p.m. Ten minutes later, an officer-involved shooting was reported.

Police claimed the teen was holding a knife when officers arrived at the scene. Hazel Bryant, Ma’Khia Bryant’s aunt, said her niece dropped the knife she was holding before she was shot multiple times by a police officer.

The endless efforts to frame police violence in exclusively racial terms can only weaken the struggle against it. The fight against police violence requires the unity of the working class on the basis of a common struggle against the capitalist system that is defended by the police.



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)