

Families impacted by police violence gather at funeral for Daunte Wright

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Two days after former Minneapolis police Officer Derek Chauvin was found guilty for the murder of George Floyd, mourners gathered in Minneapolis for the funeral of Daunte Wright, a black man killed by police during a traffic stop. Through the audience of mourners, the collective pain of working class families wronged by police could be seen and felt.

Katie Wright, Daunte's mother, told attendees, "The roles should be completely reversed. My son should be burying me," before burying her face into her hands.

Wright's parents spoke about their son, through tears, as a loving son and a new father. Wright's son, Daunte Jr., is not even two years old.

"He always said he couldn't wait to make his son proud," said Katie Wright. "Junior was the joy of his life, and he lived for him every single day, and now he's not going to be able to see him."

Wright was stopped by Brooklyn Center police on April 11 for having an expired registration tag. Officers attempted to arrest Wright after discovering he had a warrant for missing a court appearance regarding a misdemeanor gun charge. Wright pulled away from officers and sat back down in his driver's seat. Former Officer Kimberly Potter drew her gun, shouted "Taser" several times and shot a bullet into Wright's chest. Potter claimed she mistook her gun for her taser.

Wright's death sparked protests in Brooklyn Center, a working class suburb of Minneapolis, with hundreds gathering every day outside the city's heavily fortified police headquarters for a week. Police and National Guard troops responded to the demonstrations with pepper spray, tear gas and rubber bullets. More than 100 people were arrested during the protests.

Hundreds of people gathered in the Shiloh Temple International Ministries in Minneapolis Thursday to pay their respects to Wright. The families of other black

people murdered by police attended the funeral, including relatives of Oscar Grant, killed in 2009 by a California officer that allegedly mistook his firearm for a stun gun, and the boyfriend of Breonna Taylor, murdered by police while sleeping in her own home.

The mothers of Philando Castile, who was killed during a traffic stop in a Minneapolis suburb in 2016, and Eric Garner, who died saying, "I can't breathe" after an officer in New York put him in a prohibited chokehold, were seen as well.

The Democratic Governor Minnesota Tim Walz issued a proclamation calling for a statewide moment of silence during the first two minutes of Wright's funeral. Walz offered his condolences in the proclamation and repeatedly called for action against "systemic racism."

"We know that this tragedy is connected to the deep, systemic racism in our society that Black people in Minnesota and across the country face every single day," Walz said.

Amid the string of police killings in the past week, the Democratic Party has sought to present police violence as a purely racial issue. However, as the *World Socialist Web Site* has explained, such efforts seek to mask the class issues behind police brutality. Although racism plays a role, the common factor shared by the overwhelming majority of people killed by police is that they are impoverished workers.

Walz called for "meaningful change" so that "every person in Minnesota" can be safe and thrive, but he contradicts himself with his own actions, having mobilized the National Guard in response to protests over Wright's killing. Troops repelled and intimidated protesters throughout Minnesota, effectively turning much of the state into a military occupation zone.

Minnesota Senator Amy Klobuchar called for "police

reform,” saying, “True justice is not done as long as a chokehold, the knee on the neck or a no-knock warrant is considered legitimate policing.”

Klobuchar’s comments were entirely hypocritical, considering her political career. While she was the Hennepin County Attorney, she oversaw the systematic coverup of police murders and violence. During her tenure, the city of Minneapolis paid out \$4.8 million in legal settlement fees for 122 police misconduct incidents. During the same period, local police killed 29 people, but she never filed criminal charges against officers.

Al Sharpton delivered Wright’s eulogy, along with attorney Benjamin Crump, whom Sharpton called “the attorney general of Black America.” Sharpton was heavily criticized this week after he posted a video of himself walking towards a private jet with the caption, “Headed to Minneapolis to stand with the Floyd family as closing arguments are set to be made today.”

With an estimated worth close to \$2 million, Sharpton is a longtime Democratic operative with a history of collaboration with the FBI and New York Police Department, proving a useful asset during several police operations in the 1980s. After the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Sharpton infamously declared that too many black youth were “sitting around having ghetto pity parties” instead of getting “positions of power.”

It is shameful that this conglomeration of politicians and sycophants usurped Wright’s funeral for their own publicity. There is a clear degree of separation between the mourning families and the privileged political operatives claiming to represent them.

Meanwhile, an alternate juror in Derek Chauvin’s trial gave the first public indication of the moods and thoughts of the jurors during court proceedings. Lisa Christensen said the testimony of Dr. Martin Tobin, in conjunction with the footage captured by teenager Darnella Frazier, convinced her of Chauvin’s guilt.

Tobin, a pulmonologist, testified that Floyd died of low oxygen due to Chauvin’s neck restraint. Christensen praised the way Tobin narrated key moments in the video and explained the complex subject in a simple manner.

“I feel like he could actually point out, going through the video, saying, ‘Hey, at this instance right here is where Mr. Floyd lost his life,’” she said.

Christensen told reporters the trial was emotionally draining and an experience that would stay with her for a long time.

“It was an experience, I mean it affected me, you know, more than I thought it would. So yeah, it’ll be with me for a while. I hope we did it right, and we got it right. We really tried to put all of our effort into it, make the right decisions.”



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