

Thousands of students protest against police killing of Amir Locke in Minneapolis, Minnesota

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Protests have continued daily in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area in Minnesota, following the no-knock raid police killing of 22-year-old Amir Locke on February 2. On Tuesday, thousands of students from St. Paul Central High School and schools across the area marched through St. Paul to the governor's mansion. This was followed Wednesday by students from Minneapolis North Community High School and supporting community members who marched to the Minneapolis City Hall.

Locke was killed after SWAT officers from the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) executed a search warrant in a downtown Minneapolis apartment building in the early hours last Wednesday. Officers entered the apartment building he was sleeping in unannounced and shot him on the couch where he had been sleeping.

Immediately following the murder, MPD released initial statements painting the shooting as justified, citing Officer Mark Hanneman's claim he shot Locke because he feared for his life. The police falsely claimed Locke was a homicide suspect and repeating this description of the victim as many times as they could. Initial police statements also claimed Locke had his weapon pointed in the direction of Hanneman and that the officer had announced himself prior to forcing himself into the apartment.

These claims were exposed as lies when bodycam footage was released the following day, prompting several attempts at damage control by the MPD, the St. Paul Police Department (SPPD) and the local government led by Democratic Mayor Jacob Frey.

The attempts to smear Locke were particularly egregious, and they resembled recent attempts by city

officials to justify the murder of Winston Smith by the U.S. Marshall Service last June.

The killing is only the latest in the unimpeded reign of terror carried out by police, who operate in working class neighborhoods with almost complete impunity, and it comes just under two years after the police murder of George Floyd by former MPD Officer Derek Chauvin, who was filmed kneeling on Floyd's neck. Floyd's killing triggered an eruption of opposition to police violence across the United States and around the world.

Mayor Frey sought to win support out of this movement for his reelection in November 2021 and channel popular outrage back into the Democratic Party, which oversees violent police departments across the country, by promising reforms. During the protests in June 2020, Frey was confronted at his home by protesters demanding he "defund" the MPD. As part of his campaign, he promised to "invest in community-oriented officers," "expand alternatives to policing" and to "pursue real reform together." Speaking specifically to demands to defund the MPD, he promised an end to no-knock warrants. On this basis, much of the current anger is directed at Frey's broken promises.

The changes proposed by Frey, as well as the demand to "defund" the police, have the same ultimate goal as other demands of reform. Any moves to "reform" the police ultimately end up strengthening the powers of the state to oppress the working class. For decades, police reform has been proposed as a solution to violence, but police still kill on average over three people a day in America and brutalize many more.

Rolling Stone reported Tuesday that two of the

officers who participated in the no-knock raid in which Locke was killed were already facing a lawsuit over their “hunting” of a protester, who had participated in the 2020 protests against the police murder of Floyd.

The victim, Jaleel Stallings, an Army veteran, was participating in the protests in May 2020 when an unmarked van full of riot-gear equipped police officers began indiscriminately firing rubber bullets at peaceful bystanders, including Stallings. Stallings fired back in self-defense and was immediately arrested but acquitted later that year. The officers, who remain unnamed, recorded the entire incident on their body cameras.

The details revealed by the footage and from the case expose the gangster-like fascistic attitudes of the police in their treatment of protesters. The police carried out their attacks with a festive attitude, saying things such as, “Be very very quiet. We’re hunting activists,” “You see a f*****g group, F**k ‘em up, gas ‘em, f**k ‘em up.” “The first f***ers we see, we’re just handling them with 40s.” Their commander, who has not been charged, congratulated the officers in the footage, “Tonight it was... ‘We’re goin’ out hunting.’ Just a nice change of tempo.” Police also carried out other criminal actions during the 2020 protests in Minneapolis, including slashing the tires of cars and arresting a CNN news crew as it was reporting.

The police and the state are ramping up their oppressive powers as opposition to social inequality, war and dictatorship mount. Students protesting Locke’s murder confront an economic and political system that seeks to normalize death and debilitation to keep generating profits from their parents’ labor. Students in the US are forced to attend schools during the COVID-19 pandemic, exposing them to the danger of bringing the disease into their homes or facing debilitation and death themselves, whether it be from a school shooting (such as the shooting at South Education Center last week) or COVID-19. Resources are only allotted to schools such that they are enough to watch the students while their parents go to work and generate profits for the billionaires.

Students opposed to the police violence must draw the necessary conclusions, and break from the parties of Wall Street, the Democrats and Republicans. Demands for reform have been demonstrated as a dead end. Students must turn to the working class to build the only real alternative to social inequality.



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