

Hundreds gather to mourn Amir Locke, victim of Minneapolis police shooting

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Hundreds of mourners gathered in Minneapolis, Minnesota on Thursday for the funeral of Amir Locke, the 22-year-old black man shot dead by police executing a “no knock” warrant at an apartment earlier this month. Locke’s funeral was held at Shiloh Temple International Ministries, the same church where the funeral for Daunte Wright—killed by Brooklyn Center police officer Kim Potter—was held last April.

A large portrait of Locke was at the front of the church as people streamed inside to pay their respects. Locke’s body rested in an ivory casket topped with roses and multiple bouquets of flowers nearby. Relatives of George Floyd and Botham Jean, who were also killed at the hands of police, attended Locke’s funeral.

Locke was shot by Minneapolis SWAT team officer Mark Hanneman shortly before dawn on February 2 as officers served a search warrant. Days after his death, police released body camera footage showing at least four officers using a key to quietly enter the apartment where Locke was staying, then shouting their presence.

Police found Locke, who did not live at the apartment, sleeping under a blanket on the couch. The video shows Locke stirring and holding a handgun right before Hanneman shot him. He was shot less than 10 seconds after officers entered the room. Locke had no criminal record and was a registered gun owner who acquired a firearm because he was worried about carjackings as a driver for the DoorDash delivery service, according to family.

Locke was not named in the search warrant and family members have likened his killing to an execution, noting the video shows an officer kicking the sofa, and suggested Locke was startled awake and disoriented. They have also denied the police claim that Locke was shot after he pointed his gun at officers.

Locke’s death has been compared with the killing of George Floyd, who died when former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin used his knee to pin Floyd’s neck to the ground. The circumstances surrounding Locke’s fatal encounter with police also mirrors that of Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old black woman fatally shot by police during a raid on her apartment in Louisville, Kentucky.

As they remembered Locke and others who died at the hands of police, speakers at Locke’s funeral condemned police for the events that led to the young man’s killing.

“I keep seeing that still picture of my baby with the covers still over his head,” said Locke’s mother, Karen Wells. “The chief of police, Mayor Frey, and all those SWAT members that was in there, when you go to bed at night, I want you to see his face. When you wake up in the morning, I want you to see his face.”

Locke’s aunt, Linda Tyler, demanded that officers stop talking about the need for more training, and instead start using de-escalation techniques on white and black people alike.

“If it is something you simply cannot do, we just ask that you resign today instead of resigning another brother or sister to her grave,” she said.

“You had time to assess the situation, you had time to secure it, but you didn’t. So, you don’t need further training—you need to be fired,” she said. “You ambushed my nephew, you took his life. And while he didn’t matter to you ... he mattered to this whole family. He mattered to this community.”

Longtime Democratic functionary Reverend Al Sharpton attended the event and delivered Locke’s eulogy. Sharpton sought to promote illusions in police reform—even as the Democratic Party led by President Joe Biden funnels millions of dollars into the police and

has abandoned token reform efforts—and portray police violence in the US as a purely racial issue.

“Amir was not guilty of being anything but being young and black in America,” Sharpton declared. “We are the survivors of the worst condemnation in history,” he added, referring to slavery, “and that’s why this is just a tragedy that we are here.”

Locke’s funeral marks the third time in less than two years that Sharpton attended the funeral of a black man killed by police in the Twin Cities. Sharpton delivered George Floyd’s eulogy in 2020 and later delivered the eulogy for Daunte Wright in 2021.

In each of these instances, Sharpton and the Democrats have insisted the senseless deaths were the result of “systemic racism” and reflect a need for police reform, distracting from the reality that police violence is rooted in the historic levels of social inequality created by the capitalist system.

Murderous police departments are supported and funded by Democrats and Republicans alike to defend the interest of private property. Police are granted almost complete immunity to beat, maim and kill. Prosecutors and judges routinely give killer cops a pass, with only a handful ever charged, despite more than 1,000 killings every year.

As an example, Wright’s killer, Potter, was sentenced Friday to just two years in prison, far less than the standard of about seven years for manslaughter, after a judge said leniency was warranted because Potter said she had meant to fire her Taser and not her gun at Wright. Potter’s slap on the wrist sends the clear message that Wright’s life meant nothing to the state and police officers can rest easy in their ability to use ultimate force.

According to Mapping Police Violence, police killed 1,134 people in 2021 alone. Although minorities are killed at a disproportionate rate, white people make up the largest share of people killed by police year after year. The deadly force police regularly employ against the population is an inevitable result of a society riven with inequality and social contradictions. The victims of the police are of every race, ethnicity and gender—predominantly poor and working class.

But this is not how the issue is presented in the mainstream media, which incessantly portrays the brutal American police regime as a product of systemic racism in an effort to mask the class issues behind the

epidemic of police violence in America. As the crisis of capitalism intensifies, the ruling class will increasingly rely on its “special bodies of armed men” to repress any form of social discontent or any working class movement that threatens its privileges.



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