

The Democratic Party-sanctioned police rampage in Akron, Ohio

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For the last week, the working class city of Akron, Ohio, located about 40 miles south of Cleveland, has been subjected to a reign of police terror following the release of body camera footage showing eight Akron police officers shooting Jayland Walker in the back scores of times.

Dozens of people, including family members of Breonna Taylor and Jacob Blake, have been arrested for peacefully assembling to protest Walker's killing. Police have been filmed beating demonstrators and shooting them with tear gas at point-blank range.

This police rampage is being presided over by Democratic Mayor Dan Horrigan, who has imposed a curfew and denounced protesters as "violent" and "lawless." The curfew and police occupation are being aided by the Biden administration, which has deployed the FBI to "coordinate with state and local partners to provide resources and specialized skills."

Walker was shot down by police on June 27, 2022 in a hail of gunfire as he was attempting to flee over an alleged vehicle "equipment violation." Walker, a beloved brother and son, was an African-American delivery driver and former Amazon worker. He was unarmed when police shot and killed him.

The killing of Walker and the subsequent police crackdown have provoked mass anger among the working class community of Akron and throughout the United States. Protests have been held every day in Akron since June 29. Protests have also been held in other US cities, including cities in Ohio, New York and Arizona, as well as in Washington D.C. More demonstrations are planned for this weekend.

In body camera footage reluctantly released by the Akron police this past Sunday, an unarmed Walker is shown being shot by police for roughly seven seconds. The gunfire from the cops caused over 60 wounds to

Walker, according to a medical examiner's report.

It is believed that the eight still unnamed and uncharged officers fired over 90 rounds at their victim. Police body camera footage shows Walker's figure rolling and twitching on the pavement with each bullet fired by the cops that enters his body.

According to photographs in the medical examiner's report, which were viewed by CNN earlier this week, after executing Walker the police arrested his corpse and left him on the pavement. The report says that Walker's body was delivered to the coroner's office with his arms still handcuffed behind his back, and that Walker "suffered dozens of gunshot wounds from his ankle to his cheek on both sides of his body."

Those arrested and facing bogus charges include Jacob Blake Sr., the father of Jacob Blake Jr., and Bianca Austin, Breonna Taylor's aunt.

Blake Jr. was paralyzed by Kenosha, Wisconsin police officer Rusten Sheskey, who shot him in the back seven times in August 2020. No charges were ever brought against Sheskey, who is still a cop in Kenosha.

Breonna Taylor, a medical technician, was murdered by three Louisville, Kentucky police officers during a midnight "no-knock" raid on her apartment. The police barged into her apartment while searching for her ex-boyfriend on a drug warrant and shot her in her in sleep.

After carrying out mass arrests of protesters throughout the week, the Akron cops have vindictively kept jailed protesters locked up for days inside the Summit County Jail, without access to medical care or even a phone call. Once bail has been posted, police have taken protesters and dropped them off around town, far from their home and their friends and family.

While the Democrats posture as defenders of democratic rights, they, no less than the Republicans,

are defenders of the same capitalist system and lavishly fund the police to defend this system of inequality.

Virtually every day in the United States, and over 1,000 times a year, a police officer kills someone. Walker is one of at least 588 people who have been killed by US police so far this year, according to Mapping Police Violence. If the current pace of roughly three police killings per day continues, by the end of the month the police will have killed roughly 660 people and over 1,140 by the end of the year.

Throughout much of the 20th century, Akron was known as the “Rubber Capital of the World.” Between 1910 and 1920, Akron’s population grew from 70,000 to over 200,000, as rural farmers, miners from Appalachia, and African-American sharecroppers who left the Deep South moved to the city to find work at a B.F. Goodrich, Firestone, General or Goodyear tire plants. By 1930, the rubber industry in Akron employed some 58,000 workers.

Rubber workers toiled in dangerous and dirty factories. Their pay was poor, the working conditions were worse, and there were no benefits.

When rubber workers sought to assert themselves by striking, the companies conspired to hire scab labor to replace them. To counter the companies’ use of scabs, in 1936 Akron rubber workers pioneered the “sit-down strike” by occupying factories and refusing to work. This tactic was successfully implemented by auto workers during the Flint, Michigan sit-down strikes in 1936-37.

After decades of deindustrialization, overseen by Democratic and Republican administrations alike, Akron is a shell of what it once was. In the last 60 years, Akron’s population has shrunk from roughly 260,000 to under 190,000 as of 2021, according to the US Census Bureau.

Ashley, an Akron worker and protester, described the social conditions in an interview yesterday with the *World Socialist Web Site*: “Our city is not in a good place. What jobs are here are scarce... the jobs that are available pay the bare minimum, or minimum wage... the rent is so high... it is a struggle, day and night, hour after hour, seven days a week to make ends meet.”

While Akron’s working class suffers, the police in Akron and throughout the United States have seen their funding increased by the Democratic Party and its

“Republican colleagues.” Two years after the killing of George Floyd, which sparked multi-ethnic and multi-racial protests across the US and internationally, the Democrats have reneged on their talk of “defunding the police” and dropped even the most timid police reform measures.

In his last State of the Union address, President Joe Biden declared, “We should all agree the answer is not to defund the police, but is to fund the police. Fund them. Fund them.”

New York Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders have remained silent on the killing of Walker and the subsequent police occupation of Akron. Their silence is not an oversight. The unity Biden and the Democrats seek with the Republicans is predicated on imperialist war abroad and ruthless class exploitation at home.

The police rampage in Akron makes clear the utter absurdity of the United States’ claims that it is defending “democracy” in its war with Russia. In fact, the rapidly-escalating war will be accompanied by further attacks on the social and democratic rights of the population and the increasingly open turn to dictatorial forms of rule.

The nationwide and global outpouring of anger at Walker’s murder shows that there is enormous opposition within the working class to police violence. This must be channeled not into voting for Democrats and their empty pledges of reform, but into an international movement aimed at eliminating the source of police violence, war and inequality--the capitalist system.



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