Video of Arkansas police viciously beating unarmed man sparks mass anger

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A 34-second video posted on Twitter on August 21, showing three police officers punching, kicking, kneeling and slamming an unarmed man’s head into the pavement outside a gas station in rural Arkansas, has provoked popular outrage across the US and internationally.

The video was recorded this past Sunday morning by bystanders at the Kountry Xpress in Mulberry, Arkansas. The small rural community is located about 140 miles north of Little Rock. According to data from datausa.io, roughly 20 percent of the approximately 1,600 people who reside in Mulberry live below the United States’ meager poverty line.

As the frenzied police officers bash and beat Worcester, he reflexively tries to protect himself from the repeated blows by covering his head.

“This is bad,” observes the eyewitness videographer from inside a nearby vehicle. She films the police using Worcester’s body to balance themselves as they deliver potentially crippling knee strikes to his back and spine.

As Worcester continues to writhe in agony on the pavement under the barrage of police fists and boots, one of the cops is observed grabbing Worcester by the head and slamming it into the pavement.

Another cop, assuming a similar position to that of convicted murderer and former Minneapolis cop, Derek Chauvin, uses his body weight to pin down Worcester, leaning on his upper back and neck, while another punches Worcester in the torso.

Throughout the entire video recording, Worcester is never once observed striking or hitting the police. He does not attempt to grab any of the cops weapons or equipment. He does not appear to be “resisting” in any fashion.

A different young person than the one filming observes the beating in progress and yells out to the police to stop assaulting the unarmed man: “Don’t beat him! He needs his medicine!”

One of the officers responds “Back the fuck up!” Another cop tells the person to “get in your car” and points menacingly at them with one arm while his other hand is pushing down on Worcester’s skull, grinding his face into the pavement as the video ends.

Within hours of the video going viral on social media, Republican Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson released a statement on Twitter attempting to tamp down mass anger. He wrote that he had “spoken with Col. Bill Bryant of the Arkansas State police and the local arrest incident in Crawford County will be investigated pursuant to the video evidence and the request of the prosecuting attorney.”

Like nearly every other time the police investigate themselves, this investigation is not an exercise in transparency, but an attempt to provide the facade of “accountability” where none exists.

Forced to respond to mass anger, a Facebook post from the Crawford County Sheriff’s Department identified the police who carried out the beating as deputies Zack King and Levi White. The third cop was identified as Thell Riddle of the Mulberry Police Department. As of this writing, CNN has confirmed that all three cops have been placed on paid leave pending the results of state and federal investigations.

While none of the police involved in the vicious assault have yet to be charged, Worcester is facing eight serious charges including second degree battery, resisting arrest, refusal to submit, possessing an instrument of crime, criminal trespass, criminal mischief, terrorist threatening, and second degree assault.

While it is not clear exactly what precipitated the police assault of Worcester, the police have claimed they were initially called to the area after a clerk at a different gas station reported that Worcester had threatened and spat at them, before leaving the gas station on his bicycle before police arrived.

After he was beaten and arrested by police, Worcester was taken to a nearby hospital where he was treated before spending the night in jail. On Monday afternoon, he was released from jail; upon
exiting the facility with his bicycle and what appeared to be a
lawyer, Worcester was asked by reporters how he was doing, to
which he replied, “I’m doing pretty good today, we are just
walking to the car.”

While it is not confirmed at this time, it appears that Worcester is
neurodivergent and possibly homeless, two factors that are shared
by a significant share of police violence victims in the US. A study
conducted by the Ruderman Family Foundation from 2013-2015
found that “almost half” of the people killed by police in the US
had “some kind of disability.”

In a press conference Monday, Crawford County Sheriff Jimmy
Damante said that the Crawford County deputies, King and White,
had been police “for some time” and that Riddle had also been a
cop for “many years,” leaving little doubt that this was not the first
time that these police had engaged in such violent behavior.

Damante said that investigations into the police officers’ actions
would be forthcoming. He admitted that had a bystander not
filmed the police assault, it is likely he would have never known
about the assault or questioned his deputies.

Expressing more sympathy for the police who beat Worcester than
Worcester himself, Damante bemoaned the fact that his officers
were caught brutalizing a man on camera, saying that it was “very
hard on the whole department.”

“Morale does take a dive when things like this happen,” said
Damante. He claimed, unbelievably, that the type of violence
captured video was “not what we stand for.”

Despite the fact that multiple police officers participated in the
beating, and it appears that they had all been officers for several
years, Damante claimed that this was simply a case of a “few bad
apples.”

“We’ve got bad apples in every profession in this country,
everywhere, every job,” said Damante. “Sometimes,” lamented
Damante, “those people do slip by. [It] [d]oes take time to weed
them out, unfortunately.”

This pathetic excuse of a “few bad apples,” which has been
proffered by violent and murderous police departments for
decades, ignores the systemic character of police violence in the
United States.

The notion that it is only a “few” rotten cops ignores that the entire
US class-based “justice” system is designed to provide legal
immunity to police to use overwhelming violence whenever they
deed it necessary in service of the capitalist ruling elite.

Amid rising levels of inequality, exacerbated by the worst inflation
in over 40 years, war with Russia in Ukraine and provocations
against China, and growing militancy in the working class, most
consciously expressed in the campaign of Will Lehman for UAW

President Joe Biden and the Democratic Party, rejecting demands
from the millions of workers and youth who protested following
the 2020 murder of George Floyd, have tried to outdo the
Republicans in their support for the police, with Biden promising
to spend another $37 billion on the police. Of this, $13 billion will
be used to hire 100,000 more cops to harass, beat and kill workers
and the poor.

That Worcester appears to be white and the officers who assaulted
him are also white, also exposes the racist lies advanced by the
Democratic Party and their pseudo-left apologists who claim that
police violence in the US is the result of racial animus or ingrained
“white supremacy.”

While racists and fascists are cultivated within local, state, county
and federal police and military agencies across the country, the
police are not enforcers of a racial caste system, but the capitalist
system. While African-Americans are disproportionately killed at
a higher rate compared to white people, overwhelmingly the
number one factor in determining if one is going to be a victim of
police violence is one’s socioeconomic standing.

As the World Socialist Web Site noted in a 2018 study on police
violence in the US: “Police violence is focused overwhelmingly on
men lowest on the socio-economic ladder: in rural areas outside
the South, predominately white men; in the Southwest,
disproportionately Hispanic men; in mid-size and major cities,
disproportionately black men. Significantly, in the rural South,
where the population is racially mixed, white men and black men
are killed by police at nearly identical rates. What unites these
victims of police violence is not their race, but their class status (as
well as, of course, their gender).”

Since police violence is fundamentally a class question, the only
solution to the crisis requires a class response. The working class,
through the abolition of capitalism, the source of inequality, can
end police violence and appropriate the resources of society to
provide for the basic needs of all, instead of paying thousands of
police thugs to uphold the unearned privileges of a tiny parasitic
few.