

New York City police shoot four in subway car over suspected fare evasion

Sandy English
16 September 2024

Two officers of the New York Police Department (NYPD) opened fire on and severely wounded 37-year-old Derrell Mickles on Sunday inside of a subway car waiting at the Sutter Avenue station in Brooklyn. Three others, two passengers and a police officer, were injured by the police gunfire.

Police were following Mickles because they believed he had walked through a station gate without paying his \$2.90 fare. According to police accounts, the cops began their pursuit after Mickles failed to stop when asked. He allegedly pulled a knife out and told them that they would have to kill him. The cops attempted to taser him and when that failed opened fire.

The two officers struck Mickles, who remained in the hospital Monday in critical condition, with several bullets to his midriff, as well as two bystanders, one of whom was struck in the head and is in critical condition at a hospital, and another who was lightly wounded. One of the cops shot the other, who has now been released from the hospital.

Video footage taken by a bystander and posted on YouTube shows chaos on the station's crowded elevated platform in the station immediately after the shooting. Mothers can be seen rushing their children away from the confrontation and one witness can be overheard saying, "They're shooting recklessly." Both police officers, including the one who was wounded, can be seen standing over the victim.

Media reports on Sunday night initially focused on the wounding of the cop—it was not made clear that it was by "friendly fire"—and the visit of Mayor Eric Adams, a former police captain, to the hospital where the officer was staying. Mickles, meanwhile, has been portrayed by the police as a "a career criminal."

There is, however, every reason, given the systematic lying over decades of the NYPD about its own

activities, to be wary of the police account of the incident. In the latest developments, the NYPD claims that the knife Mickles was carrying was stolen from the crime scene.

What is clear is that the shooting occurred at a subway station in Brownsville, Brooklyn, one of the poorest neighborhoods in the city, at a time when the police have been unleashed by the Democratic Party across the city and other parts of the country where it is in control, in a rampage of brutality and suppression of democratic rights.

Governor Kathy Hochul deployed National Guard soldiers to the subway system in March on the pretext of providing additional security on top of the hundreds of NYPD officers who routinely patrol stations and harass riders.

The shooting on Sunday also takes place in the aftermath of the mass arrests of students on college campuses across the city over the past few months as opposition to the Gaza genocide becomes the most forbidden of political views. The Democrats, who run both the city and the state, are preparing a vast implementation of war aims of American imperialism in the Middle East, and against China and Russia. Any opposition by workers or young people in New York City elicits a response by the most militarized units of the NYPD.

Under Mayor Adams there has been a large rise in the number of stop-and-frisk actions by the NYPD, a policy by which cops illegally stop and question predominantly minority youth who have committed no crime. According to a recent review in the magazine *Hellgate*, stop-and-frisks have increased 89 percent over the last two years.

ProPublica reports that over 400 police misconduct cases are being tossed by the NYPD, in what it

describes as a lax effort to call cops to account for abuses under Police Commissioner Edward Caban. Caban resigned on Thursday amid a major FBI corruption investigation into the Adams administration.

The military-police occupation of New York subways also reflects the deepening social crisis in other ways, such as the unaffordability of housing for large sections of New York City's working class.

A recent report from the city's Department of Youth and Community Development shows a sharp increase in the number of youth who cannot find a bed in the system and must sleep somewhere, including on a subway all night. Asylum seekers who live in the city's shelter system are regularly expelled and may end up in the subway system. These most vulnerable layers of society, along with the mentally ill, are people least able to pay the \$2.90 fare.

The attack on Sunday, however, is unquestionably the product of a major state crackdown on workers and youth who cannot afford to pay the fare, which began several weeks ago, facilitated by the corporate media. The *New York Times* has featured several articles, at least six since late August, on fare evasion in the city's transit system, noting for example, that only 48 percent of bus riders in the city pay their fare. The fact that the MTA loses \$690 million in revenue from riders who cannot pay their fares is relentlessly repeated in the media and by politicians.

This was followed by extensive reporting on the efforts of the state-run Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) to harass and arrest those unable to pay the fare on its buses, almost universally riders in the poorest areas of the city.

Indeed, the MTA is in a significant financial crisis due to decades of austerity and underfunding. New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli issued a report this month that notes there is "substantial variation in the projected capital needs and uses, ranging from \$57.8 billion to \$92.2 billion, with a midpoint of \$75 billion ..." and "the MTA continues to have greater needs than it will have funding. ... While a slowdown in investment would not be a new phenomenon for the MTA, it would have compounding effects on the system's state of good repair and services over time." The MTA has a long-term bond debt of about \$48 billion, most of which is owned by

giant investment firms such as Blackrock.

Since there is no money coming from the 110 billionaires who live in New York City to prevent the complete collapse of the MTA, there are only two possible sources of income: to squeeze riders and MTA workers. Riders have been stuck with repeated fare raises and, now, with a direct assault on the poorest riders and workers in the MTA system, through the connivance of the Transport Workers Union Local 100, de facto wage cuts, subpar healthcare for retirees and union-management collaboration to cut down on so-called absenteeism.

The shooting on Sunday is part of this crackdown and demonstrates that for both workers and riders, it will be implemented ruthlessly. But the crisis of the MTA itself has deeper roots in the decay of capitalism and its inability to meet the most basic social rights of the working class.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact