

# Guilty on All Charges: Chauvin, Cops and the Racist System

After the verdict in Minneapolis more African Americans are gunned down by law-enforcement agents

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*Former Minneapolis police officer **Derek Chauvin** was found guilty on three counts of murder in the brutal death of 47-year-old African American **George Floyd**.*

The jury impaneled in the historic case only deliberated 11 hours prior to reaching a unanimous conclusion that it was the action of Chauvin and other police officers which caused the untimely demise of Floyd, who had been shopping earlier in a neighborhood store.

Police initially reported that Floyd died due to a medical emergency. This same line of argument was articulated by the defense lawyer in a failed effort to absolve his client of murder.

Despite the videotaped murder of Floyd which was viewed by billions of people throughout the world, Chauvin plead not guilty requiring a trial. Many governments, media agencies, popular organizations and interested individuals followed the hearings with intense anticipation.

These proceedings are rare within the context of the United States legal system. More often than not, law-enforcement personnel are routinely absolved of culpability when their interactions with civilians result in serious injury and death.

After the widely publicized police killing of Floyd, people rose up in anger and rebellion in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area as well as throughout the U.S. The response was in fact global when outrage over the blatant violation of Floyd’s civil and human rights spread to continents across the world. The plight of George Floyd became a rallying cry for those committed to ending racism, national oppression and all forms of injustice.

Within the U.S. last summer, people took to the streets both nonviolently and violently. Cities many miles away from Minneapolis such as Chicago, Milwaukee, New York City, Philadelphia, Detroit, Grand Rapids, Atlanta, Portland, Oakland, Los Angeles, among others, saw mass demonstrations which attracted hundreds of thousands of participants.



Minneapolis crowd reacts to Derek Chauvin guilty verdict (Source: Abayomi Azikiwe)

Floyd's murder prompted a fierce debate surrounding the origins and character of policing in the U.S. Once again there was the recognition that policing in the U.S. directed towards African Americans is a continuing remnant of the period of enslavement. The character of law-enforcement practices is often the first entry by the oppressed and the working class to the prison-industrial complex.

African Americans and people of Latin American descent are disproportionately represented in instances of racial profiling, arrests, convictions and imprisonment. Black and Brown populations constitute over 50% of all those incarcerated in U.S. jails and prisons. Clearly, in viewing these statistics, it becomes quite obvious that the criminal justice system is designed to contain these oppressed peoples in an effort to maintain white supremacy and capitalist class rule.

In response to the guilty verdicts, the family of George Floyd along with millions of others felt a sense of jubilation that justice had been done. The sister of Floyd, LaTonya, said of the situation:

"I feel like heaven is standing on my shoulders. My brother got justice, and that's very rare. He didn't deserve that. He didn't deserve none of that. I just miss him so much. I am so hurt right now, but I am so happy. When I watch this man get handcuffed in court behind his back, just like he did my brother, he is not in control anymore. He has no power. But my brother does. My brother does." (See [this](#))

Hundreds were gathered outside the courthouse and the Cup Foods store where Floyd was murdered eagerly awaiting the announcement of the jury's decision. People around the U.S. and internationally breathed a sigh of relief feeling that some semblance of justice was served to Floyd and his family.

### **Police Killings Continue Around the U.S.**

While the verdict against Chauvin was being read, police in Columbus, Ohio shot and killed a 16-year-old African American woman named **Ma'Khia Bryant**. Police claim that Bryant was holding a knife and threatening another woman. A video of the incident was released the

following day on April 21 by the Columbus police and city administration.

As usual, the police and city rulers are attempting to justify the shooting death of this young person. Demonstrations erupted in the aftermath of the death of Bryant while people all over the U.S. were compelled to think that the conviction of Chauvin will not prevent future incidents of this nature.

Other police killings have been reported in recent days leading up to and after the Chauvin verdicts. **Adam Toledo**, a 13-year-old youth in Chicago was gunned down while his hands were up facing the officer who took his life. Police in this instance said that Toledo had been carrying a gun. Yet the video released by the police and the city administration of **Mayor Lori Lightfoot**, illustrates that the teenager was not holding a weapon at the time of the discharge of the police officer's firearm.

In Knoxville, Tennessee, at Austin-East Magnet High School, 17-year-old **Anthony J. Thompson, Jr.** was killed by police in what was described as a confrontation with law-enforcement officers on April 16. The Knoxville police claimed that Thompson fired one shot and that they responded with two rounds killing the teenager. Protesters gathered outside the Knoxville police station on the following day demanding that the video cam of the police officers involved be released to the public.

Detroit police reported on April 18 and April 20 that they had killed two people in separate incidents. Police Chief **James Craig** as normal immediately declared the killings as being justifiable homicide. The names of the individuals gunned down were not released by the authorities or the corporate media which typically defends the police in such incidents.

The Detroit police are being sued by local anti-racist activists for brutality and false arrests during mass demonstrations during the summer of 2020 in the aftermath of the death of George Floyd and later Hakim Littleton, a 20-year-old was killed by law-enforcement in July. The Wayne County Prosecutor **Kim Worthy** has refused to file charges against police in the Littleton killing, saying the cops were justified in shooting the youth in the head while he was already subdued.

On April 21, police while serving a search warrant in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, shot dead **Andrew Brown, Jr.**, who was unarmed. The local authorities in the North Carolina city of 18,000 have not released much information on the death of Brown saying the case is under investigation while the officer involved has been placed on paid leave.

### **The U.S. System of Law-enforcement and Criminal Justice Must be Dismantled**

Not only are people around the U.S. demanding the defunding of the police, calls for their abolition are growing among significant segments of the African American, Latin American and other sectors of the population. **Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib** of the 13th District in metropolitan Detroit drew the ire of the police by issuing a statement demanding the end of policing as we know it in the U.S. Chief Craig soon called a press conference where he said the Congresswoman, who is a Palestinian American, should leave her office from which she was duly elected.

The Moratorium NOW! Coalition and its allies later issued a statement calling for Craig's resignation saying he was a holdover from emergency management illegally imposed by the-then Republican Governor **Rick Snyder** and the right-wing legislature in Lansing at the

aeigis of the banks on the majority African American city during 2013-2014. Craig is now an appointee of the corporate-oriented **Mayor Mike Duggan** who has designated 30% of the municipal budget to the police. Moratorium NOW! Coalition wants the police budget slashed to fund education, city services and mental health centers.

An announcement on April 21 by the U.S. Justice Department under **Attorney General Merrick Garland** said the division is conducting a review of the Minneapolis Police Department in the aftermath of the guilty verdict against Derek Chauvin, saying the administration of **President Joe Biden** wants to determine whether the policies of law-enforcement are guided by racial bias. It is quite obvious from looking at arrest records in Minneapolis, noting that African Americans are detained at a rate of 300% percent above their numbers within the population which is just 19%, suggest strongly that racism is an important factor.

Until the issue of racist policing and the prison-industrial-complex is resolved there will be no peace in the U.S. A total political, economic and social overall of the capitalist system is required to end the national oppression and class exploitation of the majority of people inside the country and indeed around the world.

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*Featured image: Columbus youth Ma'Khia Bryant gunned down by police; all images in this article are from the author unless otherwise stated*

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