

Across America, Police Brutality and Racist Violence Intensifies Leading Up to Contested Elections

From Philadelphia to Denver and Shelby Township law-enforcement and right-wing operatives fuel social unrest

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Global Research, October 28, 2020

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

As millions of people in the United States cast early ballots for the upcoming presidential and Congressional elections, tensions are escalating over the future of racial politics inside the country.

On October 26, the police killing of an African American man in Philadelphia resulted in a rebellion where people fought law-enforcement agents and attacked private property well into the following morning.

Police claim that **Walter Wallace**, 27, had refused to put down a knife while initially standing on his front porch. The police therefore used this scenario to justify Wallace being shot ten times by two officers.

Wallace walked away from his porch between two vehicles and after emerging, he was gunned down by the police. Such a rationale for the shooting death of civilians by law-enforcement agents is a familiar one amid ongoing demonstrations and rebellions since the public police execution of **George Floyd** in Minneapolis on May 25.

Events in Philadelphia represented the second occurrence of violent unrest since late May. The city has a sordid history of police misconduct going back decades where acting with impunity, law-enforcement personnel have utilized lethal force often without any fear of legal retribution or accountability.

Image on the right: Philadelphia father Walter Wallace, Sr. speaks after his son was shot to death by police (Source: Tom Gralish/TNS)



Police spokespersons in Philadelphia said that 14 shots were fired at Wallace. The father of the victim, **Walter Wallace, Sr.**, told members of the press that his son was on medications and had suffered with mental illness for many years.

Law-enforcement agents claimed that they had been summoned to the predominantly Black Cobbs Creek neighborhood in West Philadelphia saying that Wallace was armed with a knife in the street. At least two people were seen in a video posted on social media following Wallace urging him to put down the weapon.

After police pumped multiple rounds into his body, a woman, said to have been his mother, began to throw objects at the police. Soon after the shooting and the viewing of the video by many people online, crowds gathered denouncing the police action saying that the killing of Wallace was completely unnecessary.

During the course of the evening, dumpsters and police vehicles were firebombed. Riot police mobilized their units along 52nd street where the community engaged in resistance activities against the cops and local businesses.

In nearby Malcolm X Park, located at 51st and Pine, people gathered in a spontaneous demonstration chanting "Black Lives Matter." 52nd street was the center of the unrest which erupted during late May.

An article on the October 26-27 rebellion was [published by the Philadelphia Inquirer](#) saying:

"For hours, protesters confronted officers who stood in a line with riot shields behind metal barricades at the station. People in the crowd could be seen throwing objects at the officers. A group also marched into University City, at least one TV news vehicle was vandalized, and police reported that windows had been broken on Chestnut Street. Between 100 and 200 people then moved to the 52nd Street commercial district and caused considerable property damage from Market to Spruce Streets. Shortly before 1 a.m., a speeding black truck ran over an officer at 52nd and Walnut Street. The incident was captured on an Instagram livestream. The condition of the officer was not immediately known."

Pennsylvania **Governor Tom Wolfe** has deployed the National Guard in an attempt to control the communities in case of further demonstrations. The White House of President Donald Trump has offered to send in federal troops ostensibly to "restore law and order."

Social Tensions Escalate Around the U.S.

The recent outbreak of unrest in Philadelphia is by no means an isolated incident. Scores of similar clashes between police, racist vigilantes and thousands of people have taken place leading to many injuries and deaths.

Cities such as Kenosha, Wisconsin, Portland, Louisville, Milwaukee, Chicago, Detroit and others, have been the scene of police and right-wing attacks on anti-racist demonstrators. The administration of **President Donald Trump** has appealed to law-enforcement agencies to dominate the streets and to liquidate the leadership of the demonstrations and campaigns which have been persistent over the last several months. Trump, and his **Attorney General William Barr**, have deployed federal forces to numerous municipalities

under the guise of fighting crime, anti-racist rebellions and to restore law and order.

In Denver, where demonstrations have been held over the last year demanding justice for **Elijah McClain**, an African American man killed by the Aurora police, the city has experienced mass demonstrations which have blocked streets and expressways. Only 9.8% of Denver residents are African American while people of Latin American descent represent nearly 30%.

A right-wing demonstration on October 10 in Denver resulted in the death of a participant at the hands of a private security guard hired to protect a camera crew. As **Lee Keltner** of the pro-police rally used pepper spray against **Matthew Dulloff**, the guard, he was immediately killed. See [this](#).

Dulloff has been charged with second-degree homicide in the shooting. Such an incident is reminiscent of previous events in Portland and Kenosha when the activities of right-wing zealots has ended in violent deaths to both Trump supporters and anti-racists.

On October 24 in Shelby Township, Michigan, a suburb northeast of Detroit, 100 people gathered at a shopping mall for a rally and later march in response to statements made by the local police chief and a board trustee. Both engaged in racist provocations related to the advent during the summer of Black Lives Matter demonstrations and rebellions nationally.



SHIFT and Detroit Will Breathe activists rally in Shelby Township on Oct. 24, 2020 (Photo by Abayomi Azikiwe)

A leaflet circulated by the locally-based Suburban Solidarity for Social Justice (SHIFT!) organization at the rally emphasized that:

“Our cause is to insist that Shelby Twp. take progressive and corrective steps to become an environment of diversity, inclusion, and address its own systematic racism. Our goals speak to a national movement for social change

and racial justice that is rooted in a demand for true and thorough responsibility and accountability from leadership. Until our demands are met, we will continue to assemble, march, and protest, as protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.”

As the activists from Shelby Township and other communities stepped off into the street for a march, they were immediately attacked by police. Public transport buses were commandeered as potential paddy wagons. Several people were grabbed and thrown to the concrete highway on 23 Mile Road west of Van Dyke and placed under arrest.

Activists from SHIFT!, Detroit Will Breathe, Moratorium NOW! Coalition, Detroit Eviction Defense, among others, then marched through residential areas of the Township. At least 30 police cars from several jurisdictions were deployed against a peaceful anti-racist demonstration. As a result of the arrests, five people have been indicted on felony charges while several people suffered injuries due to police action.

Demonstrators later arrived at the Shelby Township police station to demand the release of their fellow activists. The protesters were then subjected to further harassment and arrest. The following day on October 25, members of some of the same organizations staged a press conference outside the Macomb County Municipal Center and Courthouse in Mt. Clemens to denounce the behavior of the police and to reiterate the call for the immediate release of those held in detention. Another march was held through downtown Mt. Clemens as well as residential areas. The five detainees were released on October 26 having to post bond in relationship to the charges filed by the prosecutor’s office.

According to [an article in the Macomb Daily](#):

“Congressman Andy Levin, who represents much of Macomb County in Congress, is making a personal plea to interim Macomb County Prosecutor Jean Cloud to drop felony charges against five people involved in racial protests in Shelby Township last weekend. The five were among 10 arrested Saturday (Oct. 24) during a protest by members of SHIFT (Suburban Solidarity for Social Justice) Michigan and Detroit Will Breathe. Of those 10, five were released pending further investigation. The remaining five were charged with various offenses, including assaulting, resisting and/or obstructing a police officer and disturbing the peace.”

These struggles which have unfolded in cities and suburbs over the last five months prompted by state repression and right-wing assaults on democratic rights, portend much for the unfolding social crisis in the U.S. Irrespective of the electoral outcome of the November 3 poll, the heightening contradictions within U.S. society will not be resolved until fundamental changes are realized.

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Featured image: A man carries a sign along with other protestors Monday afternoon. David Angell-For

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