

Police State USA: Ferguson Masses Continue to Challenge Racist Power Structure

Unrest re-emerges while white police officer remains unscathed in Michael Brown shooting

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Eight people were arrested on Sept. 28 as unrest continued in the St. Louis suburb of Ferguson. People reportedly threw rocks and bottles at police during the evening amid escalating tensions over the failure of a Missouri state grand jury to file charges against white police officer Darren Wilson in the shooting death of an African American youth on Aug. 9.

Just five days before demonstrations flared again on Sept. 23 when one of the people's memorials to slain 18-year-old Michael Brown was destroyed by fire. Crowds quickly gathered at the scene prompting a police response that later sparked a small-scale rebellion.

Windows were broken and several fires were set in protest. The incident thrust Ferguson, a town of 21,000 people, the majority of whom are African American, back into the national and international spotlight.

Subsequently on Thurs. evening Sept. 25 another demonstration was held outside the police headquarters in Ferguson. Earlier that day, the police chief Tom Jackson issued a belated apology to the family of Michel Brown as well as members of the public who felt they were mistreated by law-enforcement in the days following the killing.

During the protest outside police headquarters Jackson attempted to march alongside the crowd which was demanding his resignation. Soon a scuffle erupted with police resulting in further arrests.

On Sat. evening Sept. 27 a Ferguson police officer was reportedly shot in the arm by an unknown assailant. The authorities were quick to claim that the wounding of the cop had nothing to do with the mass demonstrations and rebellion that has been ongoing for nearly two months.

An extensive hunt for the gunman was undertaken. Press reports indicated that the wound was not life-threatening and the officer was treated at a local hospital and released on the same day.

Media agencies who requested a copy of the video from the police-mandated cameras that each officer is supposed to carry at all times, were told that that this particular officer's camera was not on during the incident. Later the police provided their own version of what

happened in the shooting which took place at a “city building.”

Ferguson police chief Jackson was quoted as saying that “The officer was conducting a routine building check of a city building that had closed for the night. A routine building check ensures

that the building is properly secured for the night. At that time, the building was supposed to be empty. He was not expecting to have interaction with anyone and did not have his body camera activated for the routine building check.”

Jackson went on to say in the statement that “He (the wounded officer) was suddenly attacked after interrupting a burglary attempt and sustained an injury from a gunshot. Generally, the body cameras are utilized with any interaction with members of the public and in any situation when an officer feels it is necessary, and has the opportunity to activate the camera.”

Since there was no video documentation of the incident and no eyewitnesses have been reported, it will remain to be seen what the actual circumstances were involving this shooting. There have been previous reports of police being fired on since the beginning of the mass demonstrations and rebellions which erupted after the death of Michael Brown.

Police Defend Wilson Drawing Justice Department Response

Support among some within the white community, including the police department which is overwhelmingly Euro-American, is strong for not charging or prosecuting Wilson.

Demonstrations have been held in St. Louis County in defense of Wilson and a bracelet saying “I am Darren Wilson” has been seen on the wrists of police officers.

The United States Justice Department is currently in Ferguson investigating civil rights issues related to the shooting of Brown. Two letters from an investigator urged police officials to prohibit their personnel from wearing the bracelets while on duty patrolling the majority African American community and to always make their name plates visible to civilians.

Excerpts from the letters stressed that “Officers wearing name plates while in uniform is a basic component of transparency and accountability,” wrote Christy E. Lopez, deputy chief of the Special Litigation Section of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division. “The failure to wear name plates conveys a message to the community that, through anonymity, officers may seek to act with impunity.”

Nonetheless, the people of Ferguson are determined to win some semblance of justice for Michael Brown. Demonstrations are continuing with the specific demand that Wilson be indicted and that reforms be instituted involving police-community relations.

During Oct. 9-13 a series of demonstrations are planned that will attract people from throughout the country. The unrest in Ferguson further exposed the continuing national oppression and state repression so prevalent in the U.S.

Although President Barack Obama was forced to mention the disturbances in Ferguson before the General Assembly within the context of his main goal of prompting yet another

imperialist war in the Middle East, neither his administration or the Congress provide any programs and policies aimed at eradicating racism and economic exploitation. Unemployment and poverty remain disproportionately high within African American communities throughout the U.S.

Any real program of action for the elimination of national oppression must emerge from the mass struggles in Ferguson and other municipalities across the country. The organization and mobilization of the masses provides the only real solution to the escalating repressive and exploitative capitalist system.

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