

US Racist Repression Exposed, Nationwide Protests against Police Brutality and Killings

By [Abayomi Azikiwe](#)

Global Research, July 12, 2016

Region: [USA](#)

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

Police killings of African Americans fuel urban unrest

Five law-enforcement officers were killed and 7 others were wounded when they were ambushed in downtown Dallas on July 6. The shooting took place during the course of nationwide demonstrations against a rash of police killings in various regions of the United States.

Marches have been held in Baton Rouge, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Chicago, New York City, Atlanta, Detroit, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Memphis, and across the U.S. In Dallas thousands have taken to the streets in solidarity with the struggle to end police brutality against African Americans.

During the evening of July 6 shots rang out in the downtown area of Dallas resulting in the multiple deaths of both transit police and patrolmen. The corporate media attempted to take this incident and use it against the burgeoning movement against racist violence. These demonstrations and other protest actions are representative of the rising intolerance and commitment to eradicate the use of racial profiling leading to lethal force against African Americans.



The following morning in Dallas there were hundreds of people who marched through the streets maintaining their position against police brutality chanting slogans in support of the victims of these forms of state violence. It was announced that as of early July 11 some 312 people had been arrested in demonstrations around the U.S. (CNN)

Over the weekend of July 8-11 thousands of people demonstrated around Baton Rouge demanding justice in the death of Alton Sterling who posthumously has been charged by corporate media with engaging in some form of “illegal commerce” as an alleged street vendor of CDs. Even if this was to be substantiated, and it has not, does this warrant extrajudicial execution by the police?

Protests continue as well in Minnesota where a local newspaper emphasized that “What began as a peaceful protest in St. Paul Saturday over the police killing of Philando Castile in Falcon Heights turned into a riot, officials said Sunday (July 10). Demonstrators shut down Interstate 94 for about six hours. People threw rocks, fireworks and other objects at officers, leaving 21 injured, according to the St. Paul police chief. Between the highway protest and a march that followed on St. Paul’s Grand Avenue early Sunday, police arrested 102 people. The protests were spurred by the killing on Wednesday of Castile, of St. Paul, but also encompassed other officer-involved shootings of African-American men. In the Castile case his girlfriend livestreamed on Facebook the aftermath of his shooting by a St. Anthony police officer.”

The Jackson Sun in southwest Tennessee said of demonstrations and civil disobedience activities in Memphis that “A crowd of more than 1,000 shut down the Interstate 40 Bridge for several hours Sunday (July 10) night as part of a protest over recent killings of black men by police officers. Traffic finally began moving again about 10:30 p.m. Traffic was backed up for miles in both Tennessee and Arkansas as drivers sat idling on the bridge, wondering what was going on. This has become a common tactic with some Black Lives Matter movements around the country. In response to two fatal police shootings of black men this past week in Louisiana and Minnesota, groups in both those states have attempted similar shutdowns.” (July 11)



Police in response to some of the demonstrations carried out repressive tactics to clear activists from the streets and expressways. The British Daily Mail noted “Black Lives Matter protesters have been sprayed with tear gas in Phoenix after a march against police brutality spiraled out of control. Police also fired bean bag rounds and pepper spray at the protesters, who were seen running away and shielding their eyes. One image showed a white man holding a Donald Trump ‘Make America Great Again’ placard interrupting the protest on Friday night. Less than three hours after the demonstration began at 8pm, police declared the protest an ‘unlawful assembly’ and ordered people to leave after objects were thrown at officers, the Arizona Republic reported. In Rochester, New York, the SWAT team arrived and police arrested 74 protesters who were blocking the streets. One organizer, Ashley Gantt, said they sat down because they did not want any movement to be misinterpreted as violence after the shootings in Dallas. Other protests were calmer, with an estimated 5,000 people marching peacefully along a highway in Atlanta as they demanded justice for black men killed by police officers in recent days. There was a heavy police presence at the Atlanta rally as protesters halted traffic, with officers on high alert following Thursday’s massacre in Dallas.” (July 9)

These manifestations forced U.S. President Barack Obama to make a statement while attending a NATO conference in Warsaw, Poland where discussions were held aimed at expanding the European and North American military presence in Eastern Europe. In addition, the Pentagon occupation of the Central Asian state of Afghanistan will continue to be a focus of Washington’s foreign policy. The successive administrations inside the U.S. have all supported this militarism despite its repeated failures in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, Palestine and other geo-political regions.

The resources both human and material which have been wasted during the course of the last quarter-century of invasions, bombings, occupations and blatant interference in the internal affairs of other nation-states could very well have been utilized to maintain quality housing, the stabilization of communities, educational reform, universal healthcare for all residents of the U.S. along with a concerted campaign to halt and dismantle the repressive law-enforcement apparatus which systematically targets African Americans, Latinos and other oppressed peoples as well as the elimination of the racist prison industrial complex that houses millions of inmates along with those who are under judicial and law-enforcement supervision.

Over the last three years anti-racist demonstrations have accelerated. The vigilante killing of Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida in 2012 gained attention exposing the fact that the lives of African Americans mean very little in a country that professes to be a paragon of human rights globally.

Killings That Drew National Attention

In Baton Rouge, Louisiana on July 5, 2016, Alton Sterling, a 37-year-old African American, was shot numerous times even after he was tackled to the street by two white Baton Rouge Police Department officers. Police claim they were there in response to a report that a man dressed in red and selling CDs used a gun to threaten someone outside a convenience store.

This police shooting was captured on video by multiple people at the scene. These videos illustrate the police attack and shooting done at very close range. The killing immediately sparked demonstrations in Baton Rouge. Consciousness around this killing prompted other

demonstrations in the region and nationally.

After a second shooting in Minnesota the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) announced that it would conduct a federal investigation. Nonetheless, several probes conducted by the DOJ in recent years have not resulted in civil rights or criminal charges being filed against the police and racist gunmen.

Later on July 7, 32-year-old Philando Castile was shot to death sitting in his automobile by an as yet unidentified police officer in Falcon Heights, Minnesota. His companion Diamond Reynolds live streamed the entire incident over Facebook. This was a major contribution to the struggle against police brutality. Reynolds and her daughter remained calm despite the traumatic and outrageous attack.

Even though it was reported that the video was soon taken down from Facebook it had already been downloaded and then shared on scores of other sites. In a matter of minutes and hours, Reynolds figuratively became the Ida B. Wells-Barnett of her day. Wells-Barnett, a school teacher and journalist, in the 1880s and 1890s, through her newspaper publications exposed the hypocrisy of the white racist rationales for the mass lynching of African American men.

In the 21st century these assumptions about the African American people remain intact. Police agencies obviously train their personnel to view the oppressed African nation in the U.S. as a threat to the supremacy of American capitalism and imperialism. These killings are by no means isolated incidents but occur on a frequent basis.

Varying reports related to police use of lethal force in 2015, indicates that anywhere between 975 and 1100 or more people died at the hands of law-enforcement in the U.S. Many others were injured and wounded as well as cited and taken into custody without probable cause.

Earlier in the month of June, the New York Times reported that “The blue lights flashed in the rearview mirror of the Ford Focus. The man behind the wheel, a 37-year-old African-American, pulled over, opened the door and sprinted into the Mississippi night. Soon, a white police officer was giving chase on foot, accompanied by his police dog. The officer would eventually find and fatally shoot the man, Antwun Shumpert, here on the evening of June 18, plunging this small city — famous globally as the birthplace of Elvis Presley, but known regionally as a beacon of relatively progressive racial attitudes — into what has become a tragically common American morass of anger, racial division and hard questions about the treatment of black men at the hands of the police.” (July 4)

The police killing of Antwun Shumpert initially did not attract as much national attention as the violent acts committed against Sterling and Castile in Louisiana and Minnesota respectively. Nonetheless, in light of the protests sweeping hundreds of cities, more people have become aware of this development.

African American advocates for Shumpert, particularly his family and attorney, linked the police killing to the history of racist violence in Mississippi. This southern state was considered one of the most notorious in regard to the highly exploitative system of slavery and the extra-judicial executions of Black men during the 19th and 20th centuries.

This same New York Times article says that the attorney for the Shumpert family, Carolos

Moore, “last week displayed photos of Mr. Shumpert’s corpse in a news conference, including one that appeared to show a yawning tear where his scrotum met his inner thigh. Mr. Moore invoked the lynching of Emmett Till and the legacy of the Ku Klux Klan, and criticized the city for not taking down the Mississippi state flag, which incorporates the Confederate battle flag.”

“They have declared open season on us, and they are killing us with impunity,” Moore declared. Moore is African American and also asked “the question is: Are you going to sit there and allow them to do it?”

This is War Being Waged on the African American People by the Capitalist-racist State

Of course this statement by Atty. Moore echoes the mass sentiment of African Americans and others who are militantly opposing police brutality. The rapid wave of significant protests merely reflects the “tip of the iceberg” in regard to the groundswell of frustration and anger so prevalent among broad sections of people.

There are trends within the political sentiment and demonstrations which suggest a renewal of the struggle for national liberation and self-determination. The re-emerge of hundreds of people waving the flag of the African American liberation movement (the red, black and green), suggests a rise in national consciousness which has revolutionary potential.

No genuine transformation of U.S. society can effectively take hold without the acquisition of full equality and self-determination for the oppressed nations. Attempts to obscure this question by the ruling class through the presidency of Obama have not been successful.

The lack of enthusiasm among African Americans during the Democratic primary and caucus process is a reflection of a mounting disenchantment among many with the two-party capitalist political system. Both the Democrats and the Republicans perpetuate the exploitative systems of national oppression and economic exploitation.

In order for a broader and deeper movement against racist violence to solidify in the U.S. independent political organizations must emerge which challenge the ruling class right to rule over the working class and the oppressed throughout the country. Political change must not be merely cosmetic but real and the material force of this revolutionary movement must manifest a level of force and ideological orientation that has the capacity attract millions committed fundamental change.

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