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By Kevin Reed
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Police in the US fire tear gas at protest against brutal Memorial Day murder

Minneapolis police in riot gear fired tear gas, rubber bullets and sandbags at protesters on Tuesday after they marched from the intersection of 38th Street and Chicago Avenue South—near the location where police brutally murdered George Floyd in front of onlookers the prior evening—to the Third Precinct Headquarters several blocks away.

Thousands of people gathered in the late afternoon and early evening and chanted, “I can’t breathe!” and demanded the prosecution of the four officers who murdered Floyd by choking him to death in broad daylight while he pleaded for his life.

The demonstration began with some protesters blocking the intersection with parked cars and others setting up chairs in the cross walks with signs. A local TV aerial video of the street scene showed waves of people gathering with homemade signs and banners demanding justice for Floyd, an African American worker in his mid-40s.



George Floyd

Floyd's killing was captured on smartphone video by eyewitness Darnella Frazier and shared on Facebook. As of this writing, it has been viewed nearly a million times. The 10-minute video shows several cops holding Floyd face down on the street, handcuffed next to a police cruiser with one officer kneeling on his neck.

The video shows the police officer pressing his knee harder and harder as Floyd cries out, "You are going to kill me," and struggles to breathe and begs for water. Onlookers demanded the police stop their vicious treatment, pleading to one of the officers standing watch over the scene, "He is not even resisting," "Get off of him," "What is wrong with you?" and "He is a human."

About four minutes into the video, as Floyd has clearly lost consciousness, the officer continued with his knee chokehold and threatened onlookers with mace as their anger erupted over a blatant public execution. The witnesses denounced the police as "bums" and demanded that they check the man's pulse, yelling, "He is not responsive right now, bro."

When paramedics arrived, the video shows the officer finally removing his knee as they rolled Floyd's lifeless body over in handcuffs and flopped him onto a stretcher with the witnesses yelling, "You just killed that man." Floyd was officially pronounced dead shortly after arriving at the Hennepin County Medical Center emergency room.

In its official statement on the incident, the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) wrote that officers were called to the scene "on a report of a forgery in progress." The statement claimed the suspect "appeared to be under the influence" and that he "physically resisted officers." The report also said the suspect "appeared to be suffering medical distress" and was transported by ambulance to the hospital, "where he died a short time later."

Initially, Minneapolis Police Chief Medaria Arradondo announced Tuesday morning that the Federal Bureau of Investigation would be investigating Floyd's death with the full cooperation of his department and that the four officers involved had been placed on paid leave.



Hundreds of protesters gather Tuesday, May 26, 2020 near the site of the arrest of George Floyd who died in police custody Monday night in Minneapolis (AP Photo/Jim Mone).

Also, at a press conference in the morning, Minneapolis Democratic Mayor Jacob Frey said, “For the better part of the night, I’ve been trying to find the words to describe what happened. And all I keep coming back to is that he should not have died. What we saw was horrible, completely and utterly messed up.”

However, following the worldwide circulation of the video by Frazier on social media, Mayor Frey announced at 3 p.m. via Twitter that the four officers who participated in the killing had been fired. “Four responding MPD officers involved in the death of George Floyd have been terminated. This is the right call.”

Details about Floyd’s life are limited at the time of this writing. CBS Minnesota reported that he was originally from Houston and came to Minneapolis “for a fresh start.” In an interview, Floyd’s close friend Courteney Ross said, “He stood up for people, he was there for people when they were down, he loved people that were thrown away.”

ABC News confirmed with the owner of Conga Latin Bistro, Giovanni Thunstrom, that Floyd worked at the Minneapolis establishment as a security guard for more than five years. “I loved him like a brother,” Thunstrom said, describing Floyd as beloved by customers and employees alike, saying he often worked extra hours and never complained. He was not working there at the time of his death due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The police murder of Floyd recalls the choking to death of Eric Garner—who was also African American—by the New York City Police department on July 17, 2014 in Staten

Island. Police officer Daniel Pantaleo approached Garner on suspicion of selling single cigarettes on the street and, during a physical confrontation, choked him to death.

With several officers restraining him on the ground, Garner repeated, “I can’t breathe” 11 times while he was face down on the sidewalk. Garner was pronounced dead at a local hospital one hour later.

Gwen Carr, the mother of Eric Garner, told NBC News that she could barely stomach the viral cellphone recording of George Floyd’s death. “It was déjà vu all over again,” Carr said. “It’s like a reoccurring nightmare.” She added, “To put your knee on someone’s neck, you are obstructing their breathing. Why would you keep your knee there? After three minutes, you don’t realize that this man is saying that he can’t breathe? And he’s struggling, struggling for life?”

Although the names of the four terminated police officers have not been officially released, the *Star Tribune* has published the name of the officer with his knee on Floyd’s neck as Derek Chauvin, 44, a 19-year veteran of the MPD. The *Star Tribune* report says, “Department records and news accounts show that he has been involved in several police-involved shootings over his career.”

The other officer, according to the *Star Tribune*, is Tou Thao, who started with the department as a community service officer and became a full officer in 2009. Thao was involved in a case of excessive use of force in 2017 filed by Lamar Ferguson, who said he was handcuffed and then brutalized by Thao and another officer.

With tensions heightened by the health and economic crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic, the brutal police killing of George Floyd--along with other recent incidents such as the gunning down of **Ahmaud Arbery** and subsequent law enforcement cover-up in Brunswick, Georgia and the police killing of **Breonna Taylor** in Louisville, Kentucky--threaten to trigger major social upheavals by the working class and youth across the US.

Police violence, wherever it occurs, is invariably directed against the working class and the poor, regardless of their race or ethnicity. As was clearly demonstrated in the protest in Minneapolis on Tuesday evening, workers and young people of all backgrounds are equally outraged and determined to stop the horrific police treatment that resulted in Floyd’s death.

The fight against police brutality requires a political strategy aimed at unifying the entire working class in defense of democratic rights for all, on the basis of the struggle against the capitalist system and for socialism. World Socialist 27.05.2020