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www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

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By Kevin Reed

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Thousands pay respects to George Floyd as Minneapolis cop is arraigned on murder charges

Thousands gathered at the Fountain of Praise Church in Houston on Monday to pay final respects to George Floyd, whose murder in broad daylight by four Minneapolis cops just over two weeks ago has ignited an international movement of millions of people against police violence and inequality.

The mourners of all ages and backgrounds arrived in Floyd's hometown for the visitation from noon to 6 p.m. in advance of a final memorial service and burial today. Among those in attendance were family members of other African American young men who were victims of high-profile killings and cover-ups by law enforcement in recent years including Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Ahmaud Arbery and Trayvon Martin.

Floyd, who was 46 years old at the time of his death, grew up and went to high school in Houston. He was raised in the Cuney Homes public housing complex in the city's Third Ward. Floyd had been a standout athlete in high school and played basketball at both South Florida Community College and Texas A&M University-Kingsville.

Floyd was also known in the area as a hip-hop artist, going by the stage name "Big Floyd" starting in 1994. He moved to Minneapolis in 2014 to find work and a fresh start and had been employed as a truck driver and a bouncer.



Mourners pass by the casket of George Floyd during a public visitation for Floyd at the Fountain of Praise church Monday, June 8, 2020, in Houston. (AP Photo/David J. Phillip, Pool)

Many politicians and public figures also attended the viewing in Houston, including Republican Texas Governor Greg Abbott and Houston Police Chief Art Acevedo, in a feigned effort to distance themselves from the realities of life in America that produced the brutal murder of George Floyd and many others for which they are responsible.

The Democratic Party's presumptive 2020 presidential nominee, former Vice President Joe Biden, did not attend in person, citing possible disruption from his Secret Service security detail, but did meet privately with the family and recorded a video message played at the memorial. Biden's decades of collaborating with racists in the Senate and rewriting criminal justice laws that have led to mass incarceration, especially of minorities, are well known.

Floyd's body had been transported to Houston from Raeford, North Carolina, about 20 miles from where he was born in Fayetteville, and where hundreds lined up for a public viewing on Saturday. He will be buried today next to his mother in Houston.

Also, on Monday, Derek Chauvin, the former Minneapolis policeman who killed Floyd on May 25, was arraigned in court on charges of second degree murder and second degree manslaughter. His bail was set at up to \$1.25 million.

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Chauvin, a 19-year police veteran, appeared at the initial hearing in the Hennepin County courthouse via video feed from jail where he has been held since he was arrested on May 29. The ten-minute arraignment was presided over by Fourth Judicial District Judge Jeannice M. Reding.

Wearing an orange prison jumpsuit and a light blue medical face mask, Chauvin, through his attorney Eric Nelson, did not object to prosecutor Matthew Frank's bail request. Frank said the bail was set high for two reasons, "One is the likelihood to flee from the jurisdiction because of not only the severity of the charges, but the strength of the community's opinion, and secondly, because of the severity of those charges, a significant amount of bail is warranted."

Chauvin's bail was set higher than the \$750,000 of the other three officers accused of aiding and abetting in Floyd's death and who were arraigned last Thursday. All four of the officers were fired the morning after a smartphone video was shared on Facebook that showed Chauvin press his knee into Floyd's neck for 8 minutes and 46 seconds and choke Floyd to death as he lay face down on the street with handcuffs behind his back.

The mass protests demanding justice in the police killing of George Floyd and against police violence continued on Monday for the fourteenth day in a row. Sizable protests were held in Seattle, Los Angeles, Dallas, New Orleans, Atlanta and Philadelphia. In New York City on Monday, there were 24 protests, marches, rallies, bike rides and vigils organized in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx beginning at 8:30 a.m., with the last event starting at 7 p.m.

In Washington, D.C., the National Park Service announced that 1.7 miles of black chain-link fencing erected around the perimeter of the White House was temporary and would be taken down by Wednesday. The announcement is at least in part a response to protesters having turned the fencing into a wall of handmade posters denouncing police violence and demanding justice for Floyd.

While the mass protests of the past few days have been largely peaceful, the social anger and energy of millions of people have continued to clash with the opposition of the political establishment and extreme right-wing elements. Although the law enforcement visibility has been reduced, curfews have been lifted and instances of police assaults on demonstrations have been less frequent, right-wing and fascistic individuals—taking their lead from the Trump administration—have carried out acts of violence against protesters.

On Monday, Harry H. Rogers, the head of the Virginia chapter of the Ku Klux Klan, was charged by police with attempted malicious wounding (a felony), destruction of property (also a felony) and assault and battery (a misdemeanor) after he drove his truck into a crowd of protesters in Lakeside, just north of Richmond, on Sunday.

According to an eyewitness account, Rogers was driving recklessly down Lakeside Avenue in the median and drove up to protesters, revved his engine and drove through the crowd. No one was seriously injured. Shannon L. Taylor, the Commonwealth's Attorney for Henrico County, said, "The accused, by his own admission and by a cursory glance at social media, is an admitted leader of the Ku Klux Klan and a propagandist for Confederate ideology."

The Seattle police arrested on Monday a man who drove his car into protesters, hit a barricade and then got out and shot one of the demonstrators with a handgun on Sunday. The Seattle Fire Department reported that the young man who was shot, identified on social media as 27-year-old Dan Gregory, was taken to a hospital and is in stable condition.

Local governments and other institutions have been taking preemptive measures to remove public symbols of racism and bigotry. In Dearborn, Michigan, for example, the statue of Orville Hubbard, the city's longest-serving mayor and well-known segregationist and racist, was removed on Friday from its prominent location on the grounds of the local historical museum. The statue, which was originally positioned at a major downtown intersection, was taken into possession by Hubbard's family.

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