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USA and racism

U.S. Erupts with Mass Protests

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"THAT'S NOT A Chip On My Shoulder. That's Your Foot On My Neck." Malcolm X, speaking in response to police brutality and national oppression

MASS PROTESTS ACROSS the United States — and beyond —exploded after four cops murdered an unarmed Black man, George Floyd, 46, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on May 25. The white cop, Derek Chauvin, 44, for nearly nine minutes, put his knee on Floyd's neck.

Floyd gasped out, "I can't breathe" and called for his "mama." After six minutes his body went limp, but Chauvin kept his knee on his neck for an additional two minutes and 46 seconds to make sure he was no longer breathing. Two other cops held Floyd's arms and legs pinned down as a fourth cop stood guard so bystanders could not intervene.

Bystanders videotaped the intentional murder, yelling at the cops killing the man who offered no resistance. His hands had been handcuffed behind his back. One person said, "He was treated like a roach."

Chauvin and his three cop associates acted with murderous intent. The cell phone videos showed that Floyd waited for the cops to arrest him after a clerk at a store alleged that he used a counterfeit \$20 bill to buy cigarettes.

The cops came to his car, guns drawn, and pulled him out and put him in handcuffs. He was then walked to the police car across the street. He did not resist arrest. Whether or not Chauvin proceeded because he knew Floyd is irrelevant. What he knew was that Floyd was a Black man — and did not deserve life.

How anyone with eyes or a conscience could not see this for what it was, a white terrorist lynching, is complicit in the crime. It is outrageous. Black lives do matter.

Four Cops Fired

Some 24 hours later, the mayor of Minneapolis said the four murdering cops were fired from the police force. None were immediately arrested or charged with murder. That night mass street protests demanding "No Justice, No peace" ensued.

The family demanded arrests of the killer cops. The County District Attorney ((DA) incredibly said it was likely that "more evidence" would show no crime was committed. Laws in the United States allow cops to assert they are doing their job always in fear, to avoid arrest and prosecution for murder or police violence.

Extreme anger rose in Minneapolis and the next-door city of St Paul, the state capital. Blacks and other residents demanded, "No Justice, No Peace" and "Black Lives Matter." Some violence did occur, including the burning of the 3rd police precinct where the four cops worked, even as the police pushed back.

Two more days of mass protest led the same DA to reverse course and announce a charge of third-degree murder and manslaughter for one cop, Chauvin. The other three remained at home until finally charged June 3 with "aiding and abetting murder."

On May 30, the new progressive Minnesota Attorney General, Keith Ellison, took overall charge of the case. He upgraded the charge against Chauvin to second-degree murder and charged the other three killers. Ellison was the first Muslim elected to Congress, prior to being elected attorney general.

Blood and Violence on their Hands

Blood and street destruction are on the hands of the cops and the criminal justice system. Even when a cop is fired and charged for the crime of murder, the “justice” system is tilted to let him off.

The Minnesota National Guard, city police and state troopers applied maximum force to push out democratic protesters in Minneapolis and St Paul on May 29. Curfews in Minnesota and other states were also imposed. The authorities’ aggressive tactics included indiscriminate shooting of teargas canisters and rubber bullets at peaceful protesters and reporters.

Some of the properties burned were well-known community centers and popular sites. Significantly, infiltrators were present including white nationalist provocateurs, promoted by the dark web and other social media, elements who heard the dog whistle coming from the White House and Justice Department seeking to use the Floyd murder to advance their anti-Black and anti-progressive agenda.

So-called police “unions” (which actually operate like a criminal cartel to protect thuggish violent actions by police) routinely defend the cops’ criminal actions and attacks community activists as “anti-cop.”

Two Americas

Justice for George Floyd is a central demand for national protests. But the underlying reason is the inequalities rooted in a capitalist system based on systemic discrimination. The multiracial demonstrators have raised this issue of the pandemic of racism that has no solution under the current system of national oppression of African Americans.

Blacks, who are 13% of the U.S. population, make up nearly 50% of deaths by cops and suffer mass incarceration. Many liberals see the issue as “excessive” police use of force; Blacks know otherwise. We live in two Americas — one white majority, one Black minority

Why is this important? Too many whites in the modern day still refuse to understand that democracy is not real unless all peoples are treated as equals and respected as humans.

The concept of “Two Americas” is a recognition that Blacks, Latinos, Asians and indigenous peoples as well as immigrants (legal and undocumented) were never included by the white male Founding Fathers as “citizens.” Every fight for social change leads white status quo forces to organize counter legal and extralegal actions seeking to reverse those gains.

The white-led backlash after the first Black president, Barack Obama, put the white supremacist, Donald Trump, in the White House. Any illusions that a colorblind America was on the horizon were quickly shattered. It is why a vast majority of African Americans see the 2020 presidential election as life-threatening.

Whites continue to see most things in racial terms even as they deny doing so. It’s why a liberal white woman in Central Park, New York City, recently played the “race call” in telling the police by 911 that an “African American man

was threatening her)” (he’s a birdwatcher) because he asked her to leash her dog.

Ahmad Aubery, a Black man jogging in Georgia, is murdered by three white vigilantes believing that they as white citizens could do so. Breonna Taylor, an essential worker emergency medical technician, is killed by plainclothes cops bursting into her apartment in Louisville, Kentucky.

The only person arrested for attempted murder was her boyfriend, who grabbed his legally registered gun to shoot at the intruders who did not identify themselves.

Dual Pandemics

How to fight the twin pandemics of coronavirus and racism inequalities?

The health crisis is much simpler to combat than racism. Social distancing and wearing masks works until a vaccine or cocktail is created. Racism of 400 years requires a change of the capitalist system, and enacting laws to enforce equality.

Most Black street protesters wore masks because of the coronavirus. Blacks have disproportionately high numbers of cases and deaths. Most Trump MAGA supporters did not care.

The majority white public generally tries to avoid honestly discussing U.S. history honestly. Racism is seen as a Black people issue, something not taught in schools.

Seeing the protests in Minnesota, New York, Los Angeles, Louisville and dozens of other cities show them demanding more than justice for George Floyd. The white nationalist in chief, President Donald Trump, urged violence against protesters.

He invoked a racist comment from the white Miami police chief in 1977 saying “that when the looting starts, the shooting starts,” He added that he would use “vicious dogs” against Black rebellions.

Trump did not condemn the killer cops and failing justice system. He asked his Justice Department to blame violence on “left wing agitators” and said he’d declare — without evidence, or legal authority to do so — the antifascist group “antifa” a terrorist organization, while not naming a single white supremacist organization or the armed vigilantes that have murdered innocent Blacks and Jews.

Antifa has responded to these groups’ actions, as in the violent racist invasion of Charlottesville. (It is a violation of U.S. law to label a group “terrorist” because you disagree with it. Crimes are based on illegal actions, not speech or goals.)

History of Revolt

The United States was founded on mass disobedience and alleged violation of unjust laws. The most famous was the December, 1773 Boston Tea Party, anti-tax protest.

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Slave revolts and runaways, however, were illegal before and after U.S. independence. Labor strikes were infiltrated and attacked by employers' agents (Pinkertons) and cops. Strikes were declared "illegal" until victory was won.

Without civil disobedience and struggle against corrupt rulers and police, no progress can be made.

What has been most positive about the current explosions is that young whites and other minorities joined with African Americans. A true multiracial coalition emerged where many have stood up to the police and demanded justice.

The difficult forging of unity with oppressed people is necessary to launch mass revolutionary movements for fundamental change. African Americans are an oppressed national minority without full citizenship — deserving self-determination.

Marx and Engels made this analysis about oppressed peoples in the 19th century. Elaborated on by the Russian revolutionary leaders Lenin and Trotsky, it remains valid today:

"No nation can be free if it oppresses other nations." (Friedrich Engels)

"The nation that oppresses another nation forges its own chains." (Karl Marx)

"Right of self-determination for all nations included within the bounds of the state." (Article 9, Program of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, 1903)

Martin Luther King Jr., the most prominent leader of the mass civil rights movement in the 1960s and advocate of nonviolent protest:

"We adopt the means of nonviolence because our end is a community at peace with itself. We will try to persuade with our words, but if our words fail, we will try to persuade with our acts."

King also said, "Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself."

In 1967 speech, the "Other America," King said about "riots:"

"In the final analysis, a riot is the language of the unheard. And what is it that America has failed to hear?"

A Minneapolis Black Lives Matter leader put it clearly: the police force needs to be disinvested and resources put into the Black, brown and native peoples communities.

The occupying force should be dissolved, replaced by community control with strong regulations that the new police force must live in the community they patrol and be accountable to that same community.

But on June 1 Donald Trump held a Rose Garden gathering of white mainly male staffers to threaten the invocation of the rarely used Insurrection Act of 1807. He said if the governors do not "dominate" protesters with force he would do so by sending in the armed forces.

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His reality show of the presidency was orchestrated for the cameras. He spoke to his white nationalist supporters and the FOX news media. He issued his claim of being a "Law and Order" president, then walked to a nearby famous church where he waved a Bible (upside-down) for the cameras, and left. Peaceful and legal protesters had been cleared away by massive teargassing and police assault.

The president can invoke the Insurrection Act only if requested by a state's governor. The law was written specifically to prevent dictatorial actions by the president; Trump's threat is in violation of the law. Since then leading military figures have openly denounced the threat. Meanwhile the marches continue.

No Justice! No Peace!

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