

Protests over police killings continue in Northern California

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10 December 2014

Over 150 people were arrested in Emeryville, California Monday night after protesters blocked traffic in both directions on Interstate-80, the busiest freeway in the East Bay Area. Over 1,500 protesters had come out for a third consecutive night of protests over police violence in Berkeley. Protesters also stopped an Amtrak train for several hours.

This was the third consecutive night of protests in Berkeley, following two nights of police violence against demonstrators. The demonstrations are part of national protests in response to the grand jury non-indictments in the shooting death of unarmed teenager Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri and the chokehold killing of Eric Garner in New York City. Estimates place the size of the crowd in Berkeley at 1,000 Saturday night, 500 Sunday night, and over 1,500 Monday night.

The California Highway Patrol arrested protesters for various charges, including resisting, delaying or obstructing a police officer. Those arrested were taken to Santa Rita Jail in Dublin, a 40 minute drive away. There were no dispersal orders issued prior to the arrest of the protesters blocking traffic on I-80.

Beginning Saturday night, and continuing into Sunday and Monday night, the police have repeatedly used smoke and teargas, rubber bullets and batons against protesters. Multiple protesters have been hospitalized, with injuries ranging from broken bones to concussions. Nationwide, protests have been overwhelmingly nonviolent, with frequent stagings of “die-ins,” in which protesters lie on the ground, simulating death at the hands of police.

On Saturday, police arrested five protesters accused of throwing bottles at police, which was used to justify a brutal police charge that left several protesters seriously injured. The following night, eight more were

arrested on charges of vandalism and attacking police with glass bottles, according to Berkeley police officer Jennifer Coats.

On Sunday night, there were sporadic attempts to vandalize businesses, apparently carried out by “black bloc,” anarchist agitators. In one of these instances, a small group broke windows and began stealing merchandise from a RadioShack store in downtown Berkeley. Someone who tried to intervene was reportedly hit on the head with a hammer.

With revelations of plainclothes police monitoring protests in Oakland and other cities, it is impossible to determine whether these actions were the work of provocateurs to justify police violence.

On Monday, the protest began with a demonstration in front of the Berkeley Police Department and then moved to the downtown Berkeley Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) station, which police temporarily closed until the protest moved on. The crowd of roughly 1,500 marched through Berkeley towards a major freeway, where police prevented them from entering the on-ramp. A smaller group of roughly 200 broke off and entered the freeway through another route.

The demonstrations in Northern California are heavily influenced by identity politics, with chants focused mainly on the question of race. According to several students present at the protest, affirmative action group By Any Means Necessary (BAMN) attempted to lead sections of the protest. (See, *Race, class and police violence in America*)

Protests are expected to continue throughout the week, with a demonstration planned in Oakland at 2:00 pm on Saturday, at the Oscar Grant Memorial Plaza, named in memory of the unarmed youth murdered by police on New Year's Day, 2009.

Protests also continued throughout the country Monday night. In New York City, hundreds of protesters gathered for a “die-in” outside of Barclays Center in Brooklyn. The protest was staged to coincide with a basketball game at which England’s royal couple, Prince William and Kate, attended alongside pop stars Beyoncé and Jay-Z. Before the basketball game, several players from both teams donned T-shirts reading “I Can’t Breathe” during the warm up, a reference to Garner’s last words.

On the same night in Phoenix, Arizona some two hundred protesters gathered to denounce the killing of Romain Brisbon, an unarmed 34-year-old black man who was gunned down by Phoenix police last week after, the police claim, an officer mistook Brisbon’s pill bottle as a gun. Protesters shouted chants such as “hands up, don’t shoot!” and demanded that the investigation into Brisbon’s death be handled independently. Nora Brisbon, Romain’s mother, told *The Arizona Republic* that protests and the media should focus on “the wrong that was done to him” and not his race or criminal record.



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