

Police call for boycott after Beyoncé endorses opposition to police brutality

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Police officials from around the country have denounced multiplatinum American pop superstar Beyoncé Knowles following the release of a music video in which the singer apparently endorses the ‘Black Lives Matter’ movement, a protest organization connected with opposition to endemic police violence in the US.

In early February, Knowles released the music video “Formation,” a song which features an African American youth in a hooded sweatshirt (symbolizing Florida teen Trayvon Martin, who was killed in 2012 by an armed neighborhood watchman while similarly dressed) standing before a line of police in riot gear apparently surrendering in the “Hands up, don’t shoot” gesture popularized at numerous Black Lives Matter protests around the country. A graffiti sign displayed in the background calls for police to “stop shooting us.”

In addition to the “Formation” music video, Knowles appeared at the recent NFL Super Bowl 50 Halftime show while donning a leather jacket and beret outfit reminiscent of that worn by members of the Black Panther Party, a black nationalist organization known for its opposition to the police.

Following the performance, which sought to paint the wave of police murders across the United States primarily in racial terms, law officials went on the offensive, denouncing Knowles for her “anti-police message.” Police officials from throughout the country have called on their officers to boycott working on security details at the singer’s upcoming concerts.

Police officials have presented their departments as under siege by a rising tide of dangerous anti-police sentiment within the population, even while police murders claimed the lives of over 1,160 people last year and officers continue to be exonerated by the political establishment.

“If we volunteer to work her [Knowles’s] event, we’re basically saying you can say or do anything you want to when it comes to police officers and we’re just going to sit and take it,” said Sgt. Danny Hale, president of the Nashville Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) in a statement to the *Tennessean*. Hale’s organization has urged its members to boycott off-duty security roles at Knowles’s upcoming performances.

On the television news show *Fox & Friends*, former New York City mayor Rudolph Giuliani called the singer’s performance “outrageous,” saying that she “used it [the Halftime show] as a platform to attack police officers who are the people who protect her and protect us, and keep us alive.”

In a grotesque statement on social media, the National Sheriffs’ Association blamed Knowles’s “anti-police ‘entertainment’” for a string of police deaths that have occurred in the time since her performance.

The attacks against the singer are of a piece with the efforts by the political establishment to intimidate and present all opposition to police killings as illegitimate and even criminal.

Last year, New York City Police Department Commissioner William J. Bratton announced the formation of a 350-member paramilitary unit intended for “disorder control and counter-terrorism,” which includes the suppression of anti-police brutality protests.

At the same time, Knowles seeks to present such killings purely in racial terms rather than being rooted in the capitalist system and the ruling class’s drive to suppress the working class of all races amid vast levels of social inequality.

According to a count by the *Guardian*, whites account for nearly half of the 164 people killed by the

police so far this year. The victims of police brutality, regardless of race, are overwhelmingly working class.

Knowles's appeals to race have garnered the support of right-wing figures such as Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam (NOI), who during a sermon on Sunday offered the security wing of his organization to serve as bodyguards at any of the singer's upcoming events. "She [Knowles] started talking all that black stuff...and white folks were like, 'We don't know how to deal with that,'" the black nationalist minister said, adding, "Look at how you treatin' Beyoncé now. You gonna picket. You not gonna offer her police protection. But the FOI (Fruit of Islam) will."

According to Celebritynetworth.com, Knowles (a self-described "modern day feminist") has amassed a fortune of over \$450 million. Knowles and her husband, hip hop entrepreneur Sean "Jay-Z" Carter (net worth \$510-\$520 million, according to *Forbes*) are avid supporters of Black Lives Matter, having donated \$1.5 million to the organization through the latter's global music and entertainment association, Tidal.



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