

George Floyd laid to rest as nationwide protests over police violence continue

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Two weeks after George Floyd was killed by four police officers in Minneapolis, Minnesota, his body was laid to rest Tuesday in Houston, Texas. He was buried in his hometown in a grave next to his mother, for whom he had cried out as police officer Derek Chauvin held him in a chokehold with his knee for 8 minutes and 46 seconds.

The murder of Floyd, caught on bystander cellphone video in excruciating detail, has sparked the largest nationwide and international outpouring of political opposition in decades.

Millions of people have taken part in multiracial, multiethnic demonstrations in hundreds of American cities in all fifty states, and in dozens of cities around the world, to oppose police violence, racism and social inequality. The protests have been met night after night with an onslaught of police brutality. Hundreds of protesters have been wounded and several protesters have been killed.

Over the last week, tens of thousands have lined up for hours to pay their respects to Floyd and support his family at public memorials in Minneapolis, Houston and North Carolina. Protests continued Tuesday with demonstrations across the country, including in San Antonio, Texas; Ann Arbor, Michigan; and Monroeville, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Pittsburgh.

With the backing of President Donald Trump, who has threatened to deploy the military to bring the protests to an end, heavily armed police forces have launched volleys of tear gas, smoke bombs, beanbag munitions and rubber bullets. Democratic as well as Republican mayors and governors in dozens of states have deployed thousands of National Guard soldiers to quell the protests. Journalists across the country have been deliberately targeted by the police for assault and arrest.

Trump expressed his ongoing support for the brutal crackdown yesterday morning, shortly before Floyd's funeral began, by tweeting that the 75-year-old man who was violently shoved by police in Buffalo "could be an ANTIFA provocateur." Trump, who operates on the basis of the Nazi principle of the "Big Lie," declared that Martin Gugino was attempting to "scan police."

While the Trump administration continues to threaten to drown the protests in blood, the Democrats are taking a different tack, feigning sympathy for the mass movement while attempting to strangle and coopt it.

Floyd's funeral was characterized by a contradiction between the heartfelt speeches from Floyd's family members and friends on the one hand, and the cynical posturing of Democratic politicians on the other.

Former Vice President Joe Biden, the Democrats' presumptive 2020 presidential nominee, recorded a five-minute speech in which he delivered a string of empty platitudes. "We must not turn away," Biden declared. "We cannot leave this moment thinking we can once again turn away from racism that stings at our very soul. From systemic abuse that still plagues American life."

Biden wrote the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, which expanded mandatory minimum sentencing, packed the prisons disproportionately with African American men, and vastly expanded the death penalty.

Among the others speaking at the funeral were Texas Representatives Al Green and Sheila Jackson Lee, speaking on behalf of Congressional Democrats. Green promised that the House would pass the Justice in Policing Act, which he declared would make it illegal for a police officer to place his foot on someone's neck, end no-knock warrants and require body cameras

for all cops, knowing full well that it would not be passed by the Republican-controlled Senate.

Houston's Democratic mayor Sylvester Turner also took to the stage to demagogically announce that he would sign an executive order banning the use of chokeholds by police officers in the city, even though his police department's policies already officially bar the use of such brutal tactics.

What the Democrats' promise of "police reform" means in practice is shown by eight years of the Obama administration—with Biden as vice president—during which the police killed approximately 8,000 people. In every police violence case brought before the Supreme Court, Obama sided with the cops. The Obama/Biden administration oversaw the militarization of the police and the crackdowns on protests against police violence in Ferguson, Missouri and Baltimore, Maryland.

Democratic party leaders have already made clear that they oppose any significant changes to policing the United States, with Biden declaring his opposition to popular demands for defunding or dismantling police departments. Former presidential candidate Bernie Sanders, who has endorsed Biden for president, told the *New Yorker* in an interview published Tuesday that he supports increased pay for cops and hopes to see "police departments that have well-educated, well-trained, well-paid professionals."

The main speaker at Floyd's funeral was Democratic Party politician and former FBI informer Al Sharpton, who infamously declared after the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri that too many African-American youth were "sitting around having ghetto pity parties" instead of getting "positions of power."

Sharpton sought to present the killing of Floyd entirely in racial terms. "If four blacks had done to one white, if four black cops had done to one white, what was done to George, they wouldn't have to teach no new lessons," Sharpton said. "They wouldn't have to get corporations to get money. They would send them to jail."

While racism in the police is deliberately promoted, the killing of Floyd was carried out not by "whites," but by the police, an instrument of class rule. It is, moreover, a lie to say that police who kill white people are swiftly brought to justice.

Keith Sandy and Dominique Perez, the officers who shot homeless man James Boyd in Albuquerque, New

Mexico in March 2014, had all charges against them dropped. Philip Brailsford, who shot Daniel Shaver as the latter was crawling on his hands and knees, was found not guilty. In fact, the plurality of people killed by the police in the United States are white, and in the vast majority of cases the police are never prosecuted.

Sharpton went on to praise Democrats in Congress, who on Monday carried out a stunt, kneeling for eight minutes and 46 seconds, before unveiling a package of police reforms that will not address police violence and, as they well know, will never pass.

Sharpton, Biden and Green ignored entirely the broader socioeconomic conditions that have brought hundreds of thousands of people of every ethnicity into the streets in protest: the social and economic crisis wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has taken the lives of more than 114,000 people in the United States and forced tens of millions of people into unemployment and poverty.

After the ruling elite gave itself a \$6 trillion bailout, endorsed unanimously by Democrats and Republicans, American corporations have carried out a drive to force workers back on the job, risking their lives in manufacturing facilities and service sector workplaces that have become hotbeds of the disease.

It is this social order, with its inherent and daily violence against the working population, that gives rise to the epidemic of murder and brutality by the police, who are the guarantors and defenders of social inequality.



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