

Amid curfew and ongoing police repression in Akron

Family members mourn police murder victim Jayland Walker

Jacob Crosse
14 July 2022

On Wednesday, hundreds of friends and family members of Jayland Walker and opponents of police violence attended a public funeral at the Civic Theater in downtown Akron, Ohio, to honor and lay to rest the 25-year-old worker who was killed by city police in a fusillade of bullets on June 27.

Walker was murdered by eight still unidentified officers following a brief vehicle and foot pursuit.

The young African American was unarmed when the police fired over 90 rounds at him as he fled. In the roughly seven seconds that police unloaded on Walker, the young man received over 60 wounds. The police then handcuffed Walker's lifeless body and delivered the corpse, still in handcuffs, to the coroner's office.

Since Walker's murder, police, in coordination with Democratic Mayor Dan Horrigan, the Biden administration and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, have sought to criminalize all protests. In response to peaceful protests, the police have attacked demonstrators with tear gas and carried out mass arrests. Horrigan has imposed a nightly curfew from 11:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. covering the downtown core of Akron, which, as of this writing, is still in effect.

The Akron Police Department engaged in wanton violence against protesters and journalists alike last week. Fearing a social explosion, over the weekend and so far this week the police have not carried out such naked acts of brutality. However, local residents report that police have continued to stalk and intimidate peaceful protesters outside the curfew zone.

These police state measures continued on Wednesday. While the Akron City Council, at Horrigan's urging, passed a token resolution the day before Walker's funeral declaring Wednesday a "day of mourning in support of Jayland's family and friends," the real measure of Horrigan and the Democratic Party's "mourning" for Walker was the deployment of Summit County Sheriff's SWAT teams and armored tanks outside the funeral.

In addition to SWAT officers with assault rifles, the police lined the sidewalks with yellow police tape and deployed cruisers and

undercover officers.

Despite the repressive police presence, there was a large turnout of people who came to pay their respects to the former delivery driver, Amazon worker and high school wrestler. Family members recalled Walker joking that if he ever became a professional wrestler, his stage name would be "string bean."

Among the attendees at the funeral were Michael Harris and Jacob Blake, Sr. Both men were beaten and arrested by Akron police last week while peacefully protesting the killing of Walker.

Jacob Blake, Sr. is the father of Jacob Blake, Jr., who was shot seven times in the back by Kenosha, Wisconsin, police Officer Rusten Sheskey in August 2020. The younger Blake was paralyzed from the waist down. No charges were ever brought against Sheskey, who is still a cop in Kenosha.

Speaking at the funeral of the loss of his best friend, Dupri Whatley said that Walker was "like a brother" to him, someone he could always call to get advice. "If it wasn't for him, I probably wouldn't be where I am today," Whatley said. "I used to call Jayland all the time, but I can't anymore.

"This is really hard for me," Whatley concluded. "He is going to live through me, I am never going to forget him."

In contrast to police depictions of Walker as an out-of-control, gun-toting criminal, Robin Elerick spoke fondly of her youngest cousin. She recalled being there the day he was born and watching him grow up and play with her children.

"I was able to know him for his whole life," she said. "I got to introduce him to my boys. ... He was a soft-spoken, funny guy, always looking to make people smile."

Elerick said that the last several weeks had been very hard on Jayland. The month prior to being killed by the police, Jayland's fiancée was killed in a still-unsolved hit-and-run accident. "The moments I remember were us just holding hands and crying," Elerick said. "There were a lot of 'I love you's' back and forth."

While family and friends spoke eloquently at Walker's service, and working class protesters have risked arrest and physical assault by the police while peacefully demanding justice for Jayland

Walker, Black Lives Matter operatives have been deployed to the city to channel the movement against police violence into the dead-end of police “reform,” racial politics and the Democratic Party.

Local Akron protesters told the *World Socialist Web Site* that at least one “scout” with the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation (BLMGNF) flew into Akron ahead of the funeral. The BLMGNF was founded in 2013 by Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza and Opal Tomoeti following the killing of Trayvon Martin.

Since its founding, the group has been inundated with donations from multibillion-dollar corporations such as Apple and Google. The leaders of BLMGNF—an organization whose structure is opaque and whose finances are even muddier—have purchased multimillion-dollar mansions for themselves and donated millions to Democratic Party election campaigns.

Over 1,000 people are killed by the police every year in the US. The majority are white, although African Americans are killed in numbers higher than their proportion of the population. What the vast majority of victims of police killings have in common is that they are working class and poor.

Speaking at a press conference after the funeral was Tamika Mallory, the co-director of “Until Freedom.” Mallory is the former executive director of the National Action Network, which was created by Al Sharpton.

Sharpton was a 2004 Democratic presidential candidate and since the 1980s has played a major role in suffocating working class demands for an end to police abuse by channeling anger into the historical graveyard of social protest, the Democratic Party.

In her comments, Mallory, unlike the speakers at the funeral, sought to present police violence entirely as a racial issue. She said the “real cause” of police violence is “white supremacy,” which is running “rampant in this nation.”

She said that while “we know that it’s not just white officers who shoot people,” the “one thing that is common” in police killings “is that the victims are almost always black people.”

This is demonstrably false. Every year, white people, usually men, make up a plurality of those killed by police in America. According to a database maintained by the *Washington Post*, from January 1, 2015 through July 12, 2022, of the 7,553 people shot and killed by police, 3,138 are classified as “white,” roughly 42 percent of all those killed by cops.

Within the last several months, two young white people, 22-year-old Joe Nagle of Michigan and 12-year-old Thomas Siderio of Philadelphia, were murdered by police. Both were unarmed.

The racist presentation of police violence, promoted by the identity politics-obsessed Democratic Party and its political appendages among privileged layers of the middle class, is meant

to sow divisions within the working class and obscure the fundamental division in capitalist society—social class.

The police are part of the capitalist state, which exists to protect the wealth, property and political domination of the corporate-financial elite of all races and ethnicities. The police are the front-line enforcers of exploitation and social inequality. They cannot be “reformed.” They must be abolished as part of the united struggle of workers for political power and socialism.

The presentation of police violence as the result of “white supremacy” by upper-middle class elements like Mallory is not only false, it is self-serving. Last year, she held a virtual tour to tout her new book, in her words, a “masterpiece” titled *State of Emergency*.

Joining Mallory on the virtual book tour were a who’s who of phony “progressives” in the Democratic Party, such as former Ohio Representative and Bernie Sanders surrogate Nina Turner, CNN’s Van Jones and Black Lives Matter spokesperson Shaun King. At the Billboard Music Awards ceremony this past May, she accepted the Revolt Black Excellence Award from multi-millionaire Sean “P. Diddy” Combs.

In a scathing letter sent last year to the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation and, among others, “Tamika D. Mallory,” Samaria Rice, the mother of Tamir Rice, the 12-year-old who was shot dead by Cleveland police in 2014, demanded that they “stop monopolizing and capitalizing off our fight for justice and human rights.

“We don’t want or need y’all parading in the streets accumulating donations, platforms, movie deals, etc. off the death of our loved ones, while the families and communities are left clueless and broken,” Rice wrote.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact