

Protests break out against police shooting in the New York City subway

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On Tuesday night, cops brutalized and arrested protesters as they rallied in front of Brooklyn's 73rd police precinct against the mass shooting by two officers in a Brooklyn subway train on Sunday. In what has been described as a "cop riot," members of the New York Police Department (NYPD) assaulted independent journalists with pepper spray and arrested 18 people. All but one were released the next day.

Journalist Talia Jane noted on X, that she "Count[ed] at least 4 credentialed, working press who were maced by NYPD. 73rd was needlessly aggressive, had about 17 white shirts [police supervisors] directing cops in a million contradictory directions, caused multiple violent encounters pushing people to the sidewalk ..."

Earlier on Tuesday, about 250 protesters entered the West 4th Street subway and refused to pay fares. The group rode the train until 14th Street where they rallied in Union Square.

Both groups were protesting the shooting of Derell Mickles, 37, for hopping a turnstile and allegedly threatening police officers, and the wounding of bystander Gregory Delpeche, 49, in the head, inside of a subway car at the Sutter Ave. stop in Brooklyn on Sunday. Another bystander and police officer were also lightly wounded.

Delpeche, who was on his way to work at a local hospital, underwent surgery to his cranium on Wednesday. His family has called for the suspension of the two officers and has prepared to file a suit against the city.

The reckless shooting has cause mass outrage in the city, where the subway is the chief mode of transportation available to millions of working class and middle class people. The corporate media has conducted a campaign in recent weeks to highlight the loss of revenue to the Metropolitan Transportation

Authority (MTA) from so-called fare beaters, that is, the hundreds of thousands of riders who are too poor to afford the \$2.90 fare.

On Wednesday, the NYPD justified the shooting by claiming that it was not about fare beating at all, but about an armed and dangerous suspect who refused to heed repeated calls from the cops to stop. In a boldfaced lie, Chief of Patrol John Chell, a cop who has been involved in police shootings, as well as ordering the arrest of journalists at demonstrations, told the media: "This is a fast-moving, fast-paced and a stressful situation, and we did the best we could to protect our lives and the lives of the people on that train."

Janno Lieber, the head of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), speaking in defense of the cops, stated, "Let's not forget why this started. It started because somebody wanted to come to the transit system with a weapon."

New York City Democratic Party Mayor Eric Adams, a former police captain, has also defended the thoroughly reckless actions of the officers.

Jennvine Wong, a supervising attorney for the Legal Aid Society Cop Accountability Project told the *New York Times*, "They chose, in an enclosed space, to escalate the situation and use of disproportionate, excessive amount of force to answer what was essentially not an equal threat. In doing so, what they have done is put people's lives in danger."

Although crime in the subway has been declining, the MTA, along with the mayor and New York state Democratic Party Governor Kathy Hochul, has flooded the system with police and National Guard troops. Under Hochul's watch the MTA has installed new cameras, new turnstiles harder to jump and various devices to detect weapons. Overtime spending for

police in the subways skyrocketed from an annual \$4 million in 2022 to \$155 million in 2023. The number of arrests for fare evasion since 2018 has increased over 200 percent and summonses have increased about 300 percent.

The MTA has determined that fare evasion costs it about \$690 million a year amid a growing fiscal crisis with a current \$48 billion debt. According to Chief Financial Officer Kevin Willens, the necessary current capital maintenance and improvement program has a funding shortfall of at least \$33 billion.

For years, the fare has been rising by about 2 percent annually putting increasing pressure on those New Yorkers less able to pay. The MTA sought to help its funding by imposing a regressive congestion-pricing charge for those who drive into Manhattan below 60th street. Due to its unpopularity, Hochul had to withdraw the plan, although she may reinstitute it.

At the same time, the campaign for austerity in the bourgeois media continues. On Wednesday, the *New York Times* published the latest in a series of articles since late August decrying the indebtedness of the MTA, this time because of Hochul's failure to implement congestion pricing.

It quoted Kate Slevin, the executive vice president of the Regional Plan Association, an urban planning nonprofit led by various corporate CEOs and real estate moguls.

“The longer we wait, the harder it's going to be to make up the deficit that's being created. We already know we lost the next phase of the Second Avenue subway with the pause of congestion pricing. We know we've lost advancement of accessibility at numerous stations across the system, and it's just going to get worse and worse if we can't figure out a way to invest.”

The crisis is real. As the article points out, the 100-year-old system was not built to function under conditions of climate change.

But what is left unsaid is that there are few ways under the current set of social relations to raise that money outside of increasing the exploitation of the working class, whether they are riders or MTA workers. The only way the city and state, both run by the Democratic Party, can “speak” to the poorest layers of the population who cannot afford to pay the fare is to employ police violence.

Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100 has a membership of about 35,000 transit workers. While the union apparatus has demanded more police in the system, it has not, as of this writing, issued a statement about Sunday's shooting. It has allowed transit workers to take de facto pay cuts and throw retirees onto cut-rate medical care in recent contracts. The TWU bureaucracy is nothing more than an arm of the Democratic Party and the billionaire interests it represents.

While the protesters are no doubt sincere and entirely justified in their outrage at the shootings, demonstrations in front of police stations or swarming subway stations with scores of fare beaters, much as is the case with the protests against the Gaza genocide, can have little effect on turning back the tide of police brutality. What is necessary is a turn to the working class as the social force able to stop the economy and engage in a political struggle against the capitalist system.

In the case of the crisis of New York public transportation and the police violence it produces, that means above all an orientation to the workers in the Transit Authority. Such a perspective requires a socialist program directed at expropriating the wealth of the 110 billionaires who live in New York City.

Transit workers and riders must be united in opposition to a system that wants to make them pay for the profit needs of the corporations and the ultra-wealthy.



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