

On Minneapolis: Police Brutality & Class Struggle

1. Watts in 1965, LA in 1992, Ferguson in 2014. Rodney King, Mike Brown, Sandra Bland, Tamir Rice.

The events in Minneapolis are yet another addition to a historical and systemic problem. In addition to suffering unemployment at twice the rate of their white counterparts (a consistent number since the 1950s), the black proletariat is disproportionately targeted by police violence, with seemingly no end in sight to the death toll. Yet, the class shows itself, again, to be combative in those dire moments. The black workers of America, along with the rest of the proletariat standing in solidarity, took to the streets and pushed back against state repression. Nothing has changed. In 1965, just like in 2020, the police kill, and the class responds in defiance to the crooked social order they murder for. The struggle continues.

2. Although the black working class is disproportionately affected by police brutality in the United States, their oppression is ultimately rooted in their class position.

George Floyd is but one of the hundreds of black people who are brutally murdered by the police every year. Although these acts of institutional violence are racially motivated, it is undeniable that the police force exists as a tool of the state to defend the interests of the bourgeoisie. While it is important to highlight the racial dynamics that exist within different subgroups of the working class, as well as the unique struggles that each group faces, it is equally important to acknowledge our shared interests as workers exploited by the capitalist class. Non-black workers should stand in solidarity with black workers protesting in Minneapolis and other cities all across the US. Workers of all races must organize along class lines in their struggle for liberation, since an attack on one section of the working class is an attack on us all.



3. “It is the secret by which the capitalist class maintains its power” - Karl Marx, 1870

Regarding racist and chauvinistic ideas inside the working-class, Marx remarked “it is the secret by which the capitalist class maintains its power”. Indeed, whether in England in 1870, or America in 2020, for the bosses, racism is fundamentally a divide and rule tactic. So joyous are the capitalists when their reactionary demagogues fill white workers’ ears with chauvinist ideas telling them to identify with the boss and government over their fellow workers. Under the theme “last hired, first fired”, the black working-class has been driven to an extreme degree of precarity. Meanwhile, the white workers have been fooled into the bosses’ trap. With one section of their class being attacked to the extreme, they now seek jobs in which capitalists can offer depressed wages and conditions.

4. Business is business, big or small.

For the last century, the petty bourgeoisie has used the idea of the “mom and pop joint” to evoke a sense of community, one that is necessary to support, especially in times of economic distress. Small businesses have always attempted to distance themselves from large corporations in terms of the exploitation they partake in, while simultaneously aspiring towards bourgeois ideals. Minority-owned businesses especially represent the ideal of the American dream, depicting hardworking immigrants who came to America for a fresh start. This successful “rags to riches” story is weaponized to justify their exploitation of workers. The violent response of small-business owners during the Minneapolis riots makes clear the fact that the petty bourgeoisie will always throw workers under the bus to defend their own class interests. Merely criticizing the police while rallying under the guise of “POC solidarity” to support minority-owned businesses is a class collaborationist attempt to obscure the heart of capitalist exploitation. Instead, workers must organize along class lines.

5. In past struggles against the capitalist class and its state, workers have coordinated strikes in solidarity with larger movements.

Bus drivers in Minneapolis have refused to aid the police in transporting arrested protesters. Workers across the city have begun organizing a resistance to the violent measures taken against the protests by withholding their labor power. It should not stop there.

We must agitate for further work disruptions and resist all efforts by the state to violently repress protesters, not just in Minneapolis but across the United States. Essential workers, such as those in Amazon or Instacart, can further leverage their power by calling strikes in solidarity with the protests. In times of intense crisis, organizing across all industries and sectors drives the point home that it is the working class that has power to transform society within its reach.

6. Police brutality can only be solved by the abolition of police.

When police commit a brazen murder, there are often demands for various reforms to stop the killings from continuing. Whether it is body cameras, additional training, or community oversight, the goal is to have police that don’t terrorize and murder the people they allegedly “protect and serve”. The problem with this approach is that police forces only exist to terrorize and murder on behalf of capital. The only way to have a world where police no longer kill people for being black is to have a world without capitalism.

7. The urban rebellion needs to be transformed into world revolution.

While we are encouraged to see sections of the class fighting back, the tendency for these riots is to die down after a week or so as order is restored and oppressive structures are rebuilt. In order for the power of the capitalists and their mercenaries to be truly challenged and abolished, what is needed is an international, revolutionary class party. Such a party would be a tool in the hands of the working class to organize itself and direct its pent up rage towards not only tearing down the racist state but building worker power and communism.

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