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After racist cops gun down youth Rebellion in Milwaukee

By Workers World Staff

Aug. 15 — As part of the ongoing international resistance against police terror, youth rose up in rebellion in Milwaukee the evening of Aug. 13 and again the following night.

After a cop gunned down 23-year-old Sylville Smith on the North side of Milwaukee, a center of the Black community known as Sherman Park, eyewitnesses state that youth in the immediate area rebelled in self-defense against this latest atrocity of police terror.

During the evening a police car was disabled by fire, along with a bank and six other businesses from which some goods were allegedly liberated.

The next night, following a protest march that took place without confrontation, some young people again rebelled. They reportedly threw construction material at police cars. One 18-year-old man was shot and seriously wounded. Police, who were out in force, reported they arrested 17 people.

Wisconsin's Republican Gov. Scott Walker, a favorite of the reactionary Tea Party, called a state of emergency and activated the National Guard. Walker also activated the Guard during the 2011 occupation of the State Capitol in Madison when he was making a direct attack on public-sector union members and their families. The police execution of Sylville Smith follows the murder of numerous Black people by police and vigilantes in Wisconsin in the past few years, including Jay Anderson, Don'tre Hamilton, Bo Morrison, Tony Robinson, Corey Stingley and Derek Williams. Milwaukee police are now in the process of settling lawsuits about public strip-searches of dozens of Black residents, among other horrific crimes.



Cops occupy Black community

The latest people's rebellion comes after a summer during which city police and other repressive state forces continued to engage in military-style occupations of popular gathering places for Black youth and their loved ones, such as Sherman Park and the Milwaukee lakefront. Black youth report they can't move anywhere in the city without some form of police harassment and brutality.

As of Monday, Democratic Mayor Tom Barrett had turned down use of the National Guard, but imposed a 10p.m. curfew on teenagers. Milwaukee and suburban police and sheriffs continue to occupy Sherman Park.

Throughout the weekend, Walker, Barrett, Police Chief Edward Flynn and Milwaukee County Sheriff David Clarke — to name a few politicians — along with the corporate media, have been denouncing and violence-baiting the courageous youth who are fighting police terror and occupation. Meanwhile, they're cheering on the cops who are rampaging through the North Side brutalizing and arresting community members.

Numerous community supporters are defending the rebelling youth and others, including such organizations as Disarm, Divest, Dismantle and Abolish the Police; Youth Empowered in the Struggle; the Wisconsin Bail Out the People Movement; the Nation of Islam; Workers World Party; and the Coalition for Justice.

The last organization was formed by Dontre Hamilton's family after he was gunned down by killer cop Christopher Manney on April 30, 2014.

An Aug. 14 Coalition for Justice statement reads: "What happened last night was not the result of greed or an ignorant display of anger as some have called it, but rather pain and frustration built up from over 400 years of oppression. ... We are one of the most segregated cities in the United States. We are the worst city for Black children to grow up in. We are a city of inequities, of under-education, of unemployment, of oppression, of drug abuse, of violence."

(facebook.com/justicefordontre)

Members of the Coalition for Justice joined the Aug. 14 protest march and did volunteer work, along with others, to clean up the neighborhood.

Like across the United States and similarly in Latin America, the Caribbean and other locations in the Western Hemisphere, present-day conditions in Wisconsin for people of African descent are rooted in slavery.

The right to rebel

In Madison and Milwaukee, in particular, the U.S. capitalist system has imposed some of the worst apartheid-like, genocidal conditions in the U.S. on the Black community.

Members of the Madison-based Young Gifted and Black Coalition and of Freedom Inc. have given testimony before a United Nations human rights panels exposing these conditions.

People of African descent in Wisconsin have always faced oppression and super-exploitation. But over the past 40 years, they have faced increasing terrorist assaults by Wall Street forces and their political servants. These assaults have increased rapidly since 2011 under Gov. Walker and the right-wing controlled Wisconsin legislature.

Between the 1930s and 1950s, tens of thousands of people of African descent moved from southern states to Milwaukee for employment in the numerous, sprawling industrial plants in the city. Even though many were occupationally segregated jobs, they were in union plants. Homeownership in the Black community in Milwaukee was high and often passed from generation to generation.

With capitalists purposefully moving many plants out of the North side of Milwaukee in the late 1970s and early 1980s, along with legislation like the so-called North American Free Trade Act, devastation soon followed in Black communities, leading to today's increasingly abysmal conditions.

Many Black neighborhoods in Milwaukee now resemble areas in Detroit and other Midwestern cities with large Black populations that have been decimated by the policies of Wall Street banks and corporations.

Over the past 10 years alone, there have been at least 20,000 foreclosures in Milwaukee, most in the Black community. Black people are 240,000 out of a total city population of 600,000.

The right-wing, Milwaukee-based Bradley Foundation has led the ruling-class offensive to shred such social safety nets as unemployment insurance and welfare benefits; cut hours at or eliminate recreation centers and libraries; and destroy public sector unions where many from the Black community could previously find employment providing living wages and benefits.

Some 13 percent of Black men in Wisconsin are incarcerated, double the national average. (tinyurl.com/qdfw4c3)

Capitalism has left the Black youth in Milwaukee, Madison and elsewhere in the state — along with other oppressed people and a growing number of poor and working-class whites — with bleak futures with low-wage or no jobs. Black communities are occupied and beloved family members are gunned down by the police.

As the Coalition for Justice wrote on Aug. 14: "What happened last night was a revolt and an uproar, not just a disturbance. The media has no problem to classify us as thugs. ... The people are angry. The people are fed up, and the people are demanding their freedom."

The Black youth of Milwaukee have the right to rebel against genocidal conditions! Resistance is justified from Africa to Palestine to Milwaukee! Police and National Guard occupiers out of Milwaukee now! Stop the War on Black America!

For more information, updates and how to support, see www.facebook.com/justicefordontre.

To contact the Moorehead/Lilly campaign, to book the candidates to speak at your campus, union hall, community group or house meeting, or for more information, contact Moorehead/Lilly Campaign Manager **Teresa Gutierrez at 917.740.2628**. Visit workers.org/wwp/ or facebook.com/WorkersWorldParty/ or email wwp2016@workers.org.