



# USA: Andrew Brown Jr killing: Justice can only be won by mass action

Tom Burns, Raleigh, North Carolina Mon, 03/05/2021 - 10:28

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On April 21, police in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, shot Andrew Brown Jr in the back of the head. The Brown family's attorney, Wayne Kendall, told CNN, "This was, in fact, an extrajudicial killing, an execution if you will".

Coming ten days after police murdered Daunte Wright and just one day after the conviction of Derek Chauvin for the murder of George Floyd, this underlines that US cops still feel free to use lethal force on ?suspects?, especially if they are African Americans.

According to the family, the twenty-seconds of video footage they have been allowed to see show that Andrew had his hands on his steering when officers approached, guns blazing. The police blocked him in with a police vehicle. As officers continued to shoot, Brown attempted to get away from the gunfire. He suffered two grazing shots and two wounds in his arm before the fatal gunshot in the back of his head.

As Brown crashed into a tree, the police still ran towards him shooting, riddling a neighbor?s house with bullets. A four second clip of video footage, released to CNN, shows numerous deputies in a police truck en route to Brown?s house prior to the shooting, an image evoking comparison to the white lynch gangs that terrorized black communities in the South during segregation.

District Attorney Andrew Womble has tried to suggest a justification for the killing by stating that Brown had drug related warrants out for his arrest. Yet authorities have reportedly told the family that no drugs were found on Brown?s person or his property. Womble stands side by side and hand in hand with the murderers.

Thanks to the spotlight thrown on police murders by the Black Lives Matter demonstrations, an official FBI probe is being launched and the governor is calling for a special prosecutor to ?keep public faith? in the system. Seven officers have been sent on administrative leave.

Superior Court Judge Jeff Foster rejected protesters? demands for the release of body camera footage. According to the judge, ?The release at this time would create a serious threat to the fair, impartial and orderly administration of justice?. A story we have heard far too often. The judge stated that thirty to forty-five days would have to elapse before the video could be released, if certain conditions were met. The family has had an independent autopsy performed on Brown?s body and has been the sole source of news about the incident.

A state of emergency and an 8 pm curfew have been declared, despite protests in Elizabeth City being entirely peaceful. Calls for support have been boosted by anti-racist and BLM organizers within the state. Protesters responded with the chant heard so often: ?No Justice, No Peace!?

Protests have continued for a week with no sign of abating. On the 27th, authorities mobilized riot cops against protesters who stayed past curfew and an undisclosed number were arrested. Local news sources have indicated that police repression has escalated since the curfew order.

Unfortunately, solidarity protests held in other cities have not yet attracted large crowds. A small group of anti-racist

protesters stood in solidarity in Moore Square in the state capital of Raleigh, outnumbered by a heavy police presence. The Square had previously been the home of Confederate statues that were pulled down during the George Floyd Uprising.

Likewise, in the town of Graham, 47 miles from Raleigh, two arrests were made after police called the gathering of forty unlawful. Graham, which lies in Alamance County, is a hotbed of far-right organizing. Several members of the town's far-right were involved in the putsch on the Washington Capitol earlier this year. Evidence from local anti-racists points to police involvement with these hate groups.

Two other police killings have also gained traction. Mario Gonzalez was killed by Alameda County, California police after being pinned to the ground, echoing the murder of George Floyd. Isaiah Brown was shot ten times by an officer in Spotsylvania County, Virginia. Brown had previously asked the same officer to drive him home. He was killed after placing a call to the police concerning a fight with his brother.

The constant stream of killings demonstrates, if this were needed, the unreformable nature of the police, an institution founded on violence and whose mission is violence. We cannot buy into the reform message from Joe Biden and the Democrats. We must remember the role Biden himself took during investigations into the Waco Massacre. His role in the attempted cover-up must be shouted out for all to hear.

No amount of reform or training will stop this violence. Additional training will not bring back the lives of so many people of color gunned down by police. Additional training could not stop police from executing Andrew Brown Jr. Our demands must echo those of the organizers in Elizabeth City. Demand transparency. Demand the release of the body camera footage. Demand the release of the autopsy report. Demand full accountability.

But, beyond these immediate issues, we must deploy those tactics that led to victory in the George Floyd Trial: mass action, coming out of our workplaces and places of education and onto the streets. In the communities that cops regularly terrorize, alongside mass mobilization, we need to organize self-defense, including exercise of the constitutional right to bear arms. Nor should this be only left to people of color. As in the BLM demonstrations, white antiracists and trade unionists need to actively join in self-defense.

Without that, we will not get justice for Andrew Brown Jr. Socialists must stand in solidarity with protesters across the country, whether it be Columbus, Minnesota, Chicago, Elizabeth City, or Spotsylvania County in Virginia. Those organizations that wish to lead the working class, whether it be trade unions or the Democratic Socialists (DSA), must take an active role in mobilizing our response.

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