

Minneapolis is burning! The capitalist system must burn

written by Gloria Verdieu
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Demonstrators chant at police officers outside the Minneapolis police 3rd Precinct in Minneapolis on Wednesday afternoon, May 27, 2020. Photo: Star Tribune

While reading Mumia Abu-Jamal's latest commentary, ["After 100,000,"](#) where he speaks about the increasing numbers of COVID-19 deaths, Mumia explains, "For Black folk this is a time of ineffable loss." What he did not know is that on May 25,, the day before his audio commentary was loaded onto Prison Radio, 46-year-old George Floyd was murdered by the police in Minneapolis.

Floyd, father of two, was murdered by the Minneapolis police in broad daylight in front of crowds of people, including children watching, pleading with police to take the pressure off Floyd's neck as he gasps, "Please, please. I can't breathe."

Video footage shows that Floyd was not resisting when handcuffed and pinned to the ground by a white police officer who pressed his knee on his neck for over 6 minutes, while another police officer stood guard, preventing the people from interfering. The paramedics reported that Floyd showed no sign of life when they arrived. Floyd died at the scene. Many saw this as a repeat of Eric Garner's murder. Garner was brutally killed for selling cigarettes without a license; Floyd was brutally killed for allegedly using a counterfeit \$20 bill.

Now parts of Minneapolis are burning, as people try to make sense out of this senseless, inhumane killing of Black people in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis that is affecting us all.

Some of the news coverage has said that this incident opens up "old wounds." These wounds are not old; they are deeply, chronically infected, not close to being healed. Earlier this month, we heard about Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Ky., murdered in her home. We saw the video of Ahmaud Arbery in Brunswick, Ga., murdered by vigilantes while jogging. The families, friends and supporters of Arbery and Taylor are running, marching and rallying for justice in cities nationwide, while safely wearing masks and maintaining social distance.

Since January 2020, the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in the U.S., there have

been 400 police killings in the U.S. — 73 Black, 43 Latinx, 11 other and 130 unknown, as reported in [a Washington Post database](#) that contains records of every fatal shooting in the U.S. by a police officer in the line of duty since Jan. 1, 2015. The Washington Post has taken up the arduous task that the Guardian started in 2013: [“The Counted: People killed by the police in the U.S.”](#)

The counting began in 2013, after the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement released a 2012 report that found a Black person is killed by the police, security personnel or vigilantes in the U.S. every 28 hours.

Have the numbers changed in the past eight years? According to the Washington Post, the death toll is unchanged. The database shows that the number of Black people killed by the police in 2015 was 258; in 2016 it was 234; in 2017 the number was 223; in 2018 it was 229; in 2019 it was 235; and, as of May 28, 2020, the number was 73. This does not include George Floyd. He hasn't been added to the database as of May 28, though he was killed by police on May 25.

Over four-and-a-half years, the Washington Post database has a total of 5,338 people shot and killed by the police. Of the deaths, 1252 are Black, 1091 are nonwhite and 610 are unknown. According to the 2016 U.S. census data, white people are the racial majority, 72 percent of the population. African Americans are the largest racial minority at 12.7 percent; Latinx people are the largest ethnic group at 17.8 percent; and Indigenous peoples are just under 1 percent.

The above numbers are less than the numbers on the Guardian's database because the Washington Post does not count people who died in police custody, were killed by off-duty police, by vigilantes, security guards or people killed by police while in pursuit. Some examples of people not included would be Freddie Gray, Leah Jenkins, Ahmaud Arbery, Marlyn Barnes and many others. Another disturbing factor is that out of the 400 people killed in 2020, 130 are listed as race unknown.

Even with these flaws, the Washington Post database is important and commendable. It is far from easy and requires input from many resources, but it is absolutely necessary.

Mumia speaks of the ineffable loss that Black people are facing by the deaths during this pandemic. The devastating sadness and anger is intensified with the increasingly relentless persecution by the police of the Black and Brown communities across the U.S. Even though this has a huge impact on communities of color, police terror affects all communities, and it has not let up during the national COVID-19 crisis.

The police continue to do what they do. Black Lives do not matter; Brown lives do not matter; poor lives do not matter. Today, Minneapolis is burning. Soon the masses of people must realize that this whole capitalist system itself must burn and, until it does, we will continue to be brutalized, because in capitalism there is no room for human compassion or dignity.

