

Defend activists and organizers under attack! Defend Black lives!

written by Struggle - La Lucha

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Protesters arrested during police riot in Tallahassee, Fla. Sept. 5.

As the anti-racist uprising of 2020 roiled “business as usual” in cities across the U.S., many protesters have been hit with severe charges after being arrested for offenses that would normally be considered violations or misdemeanors. Many arrestees are facing possible sentences of years in prison or even life sentences.

In a dangerous attack on our right to protest, Attorney General William Barr in a recent conference call with U.S. attorneys across the country even encouraged sedition charges be widely used against anti-racist protestors. Sedition means conspiracy and intent to overthrow the U.S. government and can result in 20 years in prison.

The Socialist Unity Party has issued an appeal to all revolutionary left organizations and activists to unite in defense of those facing repression from the capitalist state and its allies in the white supremacist-fascist movement. (Read the appeal in [English](#) or [Spanish](#).)

Please share widely. This list will be updated regularly. If you know of a case that should be added, send details to info@struggle-la-lucha.com.

Here are some important cases and actions that your organization or you as an individual can help to publicize and defend:

Philadelphia

An uprising against racist police terror swept through Philadelphia after cops killed Walter Wallace Jr. on Oct. 26. By the following day, Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf had deployed the National Guard to occupy the city to “protect businesses.”

On Oct. 28, federal troops raided the home of Anthony “Ant” Smith, a well-known Black community activist, teacher and member of the Philly Coalition for REAL

Justice. Smith was jailed for several days without being allowed to speak to an attorney or post bail. He faces multiple federal charges.

According to the Philly Coalition for REAL Justice, “On Oct. 28, federal officers arrested Smith on trumped-up charges related to resistance activities that occurred earlier this summer during the rebellion after the police murder of George Floyd. These types of bogus charges parallel the racist police tactics that have led to the incarceration of countless Black liberation leaders. They must be urgently resisted.”

For information on how to support Ant Smith and others arrested in Philadelphia, email phillyforrealjustice@gmail.com; Facebook: PhillyforREALjustice; and Twitter: @PHLRealJustice.

Detroit area

Police in Shelby Township, Mich., a Detroit suburb, charged five protesters with felonies (resisting arrest, obstruction, assault) after arresting them for stepping off the sidewalk during a protest on Oct. 24. Police came with riot shields, batons and attack dogs to threaten peaceful protesters in scenes reminiscent of Birmingham 1963. The Shelby 5 are Jessica Nadeau-Mayer, Tristan Taylor, David Mitchell, Samantha Phillips and James Deininger.

“These arrests and charges are an egregious violation of First Amendment rights,” according to Detroit Will Breathe, one of the groups that organized the protest. “Shelby Township’s Chief of Police Robert Shelide, Michigan’s own Bull Connor, has made statements calling protesters ‘vicious subhumans’ and threatened to put them in body bags. This racist rhetoric is shocking to the conscience, and even more so when backed up with action by the officers who work for him, like we saw last week. Macomb County Prosecutor Jean Cloud has chosen to pursue these charges, showing that she clearly stands with Jim Crow racism and the suppression of the right to protest. We demand that Jean Cloud drop these charges immediately!”

Readers can help by calling Macomb County Prosecutor Jean Cloud at (586) 469-5696 and Macomb County Executive Mark Hackel at (586) 469-7001 to demand that charges be dropped against the Shelby 5. You can also send protest emails to officials when you sign the petition to [“Drop the charges against the Shelby 5!”](#)

Louisville

In Louisville Sept. 24, cops trapped and corralled marchers protesting the state's refusal to charge the cops who murdered Breonna Taylor. They arrested 127 people and surrounded a church where protesters had gathered, refusing to let them leave.

Among the arrested were State Rep. Attica Scott and her daughter Ashanti. Representative Scott was targeted by the cops, who shouted, "Circle her," as she and her daughter tried to enter the church.

Scott, the only Black woman in the Kentucky legislature, is the author of [a bill to abolish no-knock warrants](#) in the state, Breonna's Law. She is charged with inciting to riot. That's the same level of felony as the wanton endangerment charge against former cop Brett Hankison, who fired into the wrong apartment when his partners were murdering Breonna Taylor.

Cops absurdly accuse Scott and other protesters of trying to burn down a public library. "I have no idea where that came from and I'm quite frankly offended and disgusted that they would try to accuse me of setting fire to the library when I'm one of its biggest champions," Scott said. "And this is the library in my district, District 41. That makes absolutely no sense."

San Diego

Denzel Draughn, a well-known San Diego anti-racist activist and supporter of the African People's Socialist Party, was arrested Aug. 28 at a demonstration in solidarity with the movement in Kenosha, Wis., calling for justice for Jacob Blake,

who was shot seven times in the back by police. Draughn is charged based on the ridiculous claim that he pepper-sprayed nine cops. He is facing 19 felony charges as a result. The allegations stem from an incident when a group of demonstrators tried to defend themselves against a violent police assault. Ten people were arrested, but Draughn has been singled out for the harshest treatment. At the request of San Diego cops, his bail is set at the outrageous amount of \$750,000 — an amount usually reserved for kidnapping or murder.

- Watch: [Interview of Muambi Tanga of the African People's Socialist Party about Denzel Draughn case](#)
- Donate to \$ParrishDavis on CashApp, @Parrish-Davis on Venmo or the Dede McClure Community Bail Fund: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-us-raise-funds-to-support-our-community>

Denver

On Sept. 17, police agencies in the Denver area arrested anti-racist organizers in a coordinated assault. Terrance Roberts of the Front Line Party for Revolutionary Action was arrested, as well as Whitney Lucero and Trey Anthony Quinn. So was Russell Ruch in a parking lot at a Home Depot. Five police cars surrounded and arrested Lillian House while she was driving. That afternoon, SWAT teams arrived at Joel Northam's home and arrested him. Eliza Lucero was also arrested. These last four are members of the Party for Socialism and Liberation. All five are organizers of protests to demand justice for Elijah McClain, who was brutally murdered by the Aurora Police Department. After days in jail, they've been bailed out. They face multiple felony charges and years in prison in an obvious frameup aimed at stopping the movement for justice for Elijah McClain.

- Over 500 people march on the Colorado capitol in Denver on Sept. 19.
- Sign the petition to drop the charges: <https://www.pslweb.org/dropthecharges>

- Donate here to the legal and political support campaigns for these organizers: <https://www.pslweb.org/donate4denver>

Tallahassee, Fla.

On Sept. 5, Tallahassee police and Leon County sheriffs attacked a peaceful Black Lives Matter demonstration. After pulling a Black woman organizer from her car, 300 police attacked around 75 to 100 protesters. Fourteen were arrested on the spot and five more have been arrested since, including members of the Students for a Democratic Society and the Freedom Road Socialist Organization. The majority are facing multiple charges, including felonies, that could result in fines of \$10,000 and 10 years in prison. Others face up to one year in jail and a \$1,000 fine for each misdemeanor they're charged with. The demonstration was to protest a grand jury decision not to indict the police officers who murdered Tony McDade, Mychael Johnson and Wilburn Woodard. The three were gunned down by Tallahassee police in March and May of this year.

- Call State Attorney Jack Campbell at (850) 606-6000, or email saotech@leoncountyfl.gov
- Click the “File a Complaint” button on the Tallahassee Police Department webpage at <https://www.talgov.com/publicsafety/tpd-compliment.aspx>
- Go to the GoFundMe page to help with the legal fund: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/community-supportfor-blm-protestors-in-tally>

Portland, Ore.

The battle against police racism is raging in Portland. Nightly demonstrations have entered their fourth month. Since the end of May, hundreds have been arrested. In August, hoping to quell the protests, incoming Multnomah County District Attorney Mike Schmidt dropped charges against protestors. Demonstrations to challenge systemic racism, arrests and brutality continued, and charges have become more

severe. On Aug. 27, a [news release by the U.S. Attorney's District of Oregon office](#) announced that it is going ahead with prosecutions of 100 people who have been arrested since May, many by Trump's federal officers. Seventy-four of them are facing felonies that could result in prison sentences of years. A Sept. 5 [NPR audit](#) of the felony charges concludes that the actions protestors were accused of and arrested for were minor and should never have resulted in felonies.

- Call the District Attorney's office at (503) 727-1000 or comment on the U.S. Attorney's Office District of Oregon website by emailing usaor.webmaster@usdoj.gov to demand that charges be dropped against anti-racist protesters.

Oklahoma City

In Oklahoma, where the entire Black community of Tulsa was burned down in 1921, and where a white supremacist attack killed 168 people in 1995, Oklahoma County District Attorney Lewis Prater has charged three teenagers, Malachai Davis, Haley Lin Crawford and Sydney Lynch — as well as two other participants in protests against the police murder of George Floyd — with terrorism. The bond amounts for a dozen other arrestees are between \$200,000 and \$1 million. The harshest treatment has been directed at those arrestees who are African American. Terrorism convictions could mean years or even decades in prison for charges that should have been misdemeanors. In May, DA Prater refused to charge cops who killed Isaiah Lewis during a mental health crisis in September 2019. When 42-year-old Derrick Scott was in custody of Oklahoma City cops in May 2019, he told them he couldn't breathe and asked for his medicine. The cop's response was "I don't care." Scott died soon afterward, but Prater brought no charges against those cops either. In August of this year, James Harmon was shot in the head by cops, also in Prater's jurisdiction, and there is no indication that charges will be brought against the cops who killed him.

- Call DA Lewis Prater's office at (405) 713-1600 and demand that he drop all charges against anti-racist protesters and bring charges against killer cops.

Salt Lake City

In Salt Lake City, a group of protestors are charged with felony criminal mischief. District Attorney Sim Gill added a “gang enhancement,” which could mean life sentences for seven people who were protesting Gill’s decision not to file charges against two SLC cops who shot Bernardo Palacios-Carbajal in the back and killed him. Gill justifies the gang enhancement by saying that the activists conspired to splash red paint and break the windows of a building. The gang enhancement is an inherently racist feature of the criminal justice system, and the fact that it is being used against people protesting police murders of people of color is a further travesty of justice. More than 30 others in Salt Lake City have been hit with serious charges stemming from recent anti-racist demonstrations, including some felonies.

- Call District Attorney Sim Gill’s office at (385) 468-7600 to demand he drop charges against anti-racist protesters.

Miami

Jonathon Gartrelle, a leading gay, African American, anti-racist activist in Miami, is charged with strong-arm robbery and escape — both felonies — as well as two misdemeanors. Jonathon is accused of removing two Trump flags from parked vehicles and dropping them on the ground while counterprotesting at a pro-Trump caravan. Gartrelle himself was hit by an SUV, which drove away and was not pursued by the cops, who are falsely claiming that Gartrelle declined to press charges. Gartrelle wanted to press charges but refused to go with them in a police cruiser to fill out a report at a precinct.

- Sign the petition:
<https://www.change.org/p/miami-police-department-justice-for-jonni>

- Call Miami-Dade State Attorney Katherine Fernandez-Rundel at (305) 547-0100 to demand that she drop charges against Jonathon Gartrelle.

An appeal to revolutionaries: We must defend each other from state attack

Llamado a los revolucionarios: debemos defendernos unos a otros del ataque estatal

New York City

In a case that many interpret as one of the earliest expressions of the White House war on Black Lives Matter protesters, two young attorneys are facing charges brought against them by the NYPD/FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force, charges that carry a minimum sentence of 45 years and a maximum of life imprisonment.

Colinford Mattis is the son of Jamaican parents. Before being arrested, he represented low-income women in family court. Urooj Rahman is the daughter of Pakistani parents, who, until the arrest, worked as a lawyer defending tenants at Bronx Tenant's Court. Both have come to be known as "people's lawyers."

Mattis and Rahman are accused of burning a police van at a demonstration just days after the police murder of George Floyd. The van was empty, already had all its windows broken out and was covered with spray paint. They were bailed out of jail after being arrested, but prosecutors appealed, their bail was revoked, and they remain in jail as of today.

According to a [Sept. 16 Buzzfeed article](#) about the case, "Many local prosecutors were stunned by the severity of the charges." Were this not part of the Trump/Barr all-out war on anti-racist protesters, the charges would have been "local," and at worst would have meant a one-year sentence.

Follow the links to support the defense funds for [Colinford Mattis](#) and [Urooj Rahman](#).

Compiled by Scott Scheffer

