

Outrage over protection of killer cops expressed at Sacramento City Council meeting

By David Moore and Evan Blake
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Over 100 people attended a special meeting of the Sacramento City Council Wednesday to make public comments on the police killing of Stephon Clark and voice their outrage over official indifference and corruption. Some traveled from as far away as Los Angeles and Minneapolis.

More than two weeks since Sacramento police chased the unarmed Stephon Clark into his grandparents' backyard and shot him multiple times in the back, no charges have been filed against the police. The officers' initial story that they shot in self-defense because Clark was advancing towards them and they thought he was holding a gun, fell apart rapidly.

Body camera footage showed the officers firing twenty times without identifying themselves as Clark fled, and an independent autopsy commissioned by the family confirmed that Clark was shot eight times, six in the back, one on the side, and one in the leg.

In an apparent effort to get their stories straight the officers muted their body cameras after the shooting to talk off the record. The officers are currently on paid administrative leave, and the police department is currently carrying out "use-of-force" investigation. Criminal charges against the officers are, incredibly, unlikely. Although police kill over 1,000 people a year, only 80 officers were charged for murder or manslaughter for on-duty shootings between 2005 and 2017.

Since Clark was first killed, there have been persistent protests demanding that charges be brought against his killers. Saturday night a protester was struck by a sheriff's SUV, which rapidly fled the scene. No charges have been filed in that case either.

During the public comments, protesters repeatedly

denounced the lack of transparency and the incestuous ties between the police union, the district attorney (DA) and the City Council. Anne Marie Schubert, the district attorney, is currently up for election and endorsed by the entire City Council of Sacramento, including Democratic Mayor Darrell Steinberg.

In a recent interview with Capital Public Radio, Schubert stated that her office depends upon the Sacramento Police Department's internal investigation. According to Schubert, the DA's office will not officially have the case until after the police turn it over to them.

Two days after Clark was killed, Schubert's campaign received a \$10,000 donation from the California Statewide Law Enforcement Association. Three days after that, the Sacramento County Alliance of Law Enforcement gave her \$3,000.

In the same radio interview, Schubert claimed those donations do not influence her because "When I ran the first time I received contributions from law enforcement as well," in 2014. Her office estimated based on comparable cases that there will be a decision on whether to file charges against the cops that killed Stephon Clark in six to twelve months.

The theme that protesters at the city council meeting kept coming back to was that if any ordinary citizen acted as the officers did, they would be behind bars immediately. It would not take a year to gather evidence for a videotaped shooting or videotaped hit and run with known suspects before bringing charges. What emerged most clearly from the public comments was a conviction that the police and the government did not serve the working class.

A young woman named Lindsay told the council,

“You have people in here complaining about the cost of housing, people in here talking about the quality of their river, about the quality of life, about people getting killed in the streets. Every point in history has showed you what happens next. And you all, including your officers, have showed us and expressed fully how terrified you are of us. And just know that you’re not ready, and all we’re asking for is a little bit of justice. I’m tired of looking into hollow eyes, seeing it on TV, watching you... And so, I’m not even asking for justice. I’m telling you, you better give us justice, because you’re damn sure not ready for what comes next.”

Anthony, who traveled from Los Angeles with the activist group Youth Justice Coalition, told the crowd, “The whole state is watching, the whole country is watching, and the world is watching. Everyone is following your lead, so keep shutting it down and keep putting pressure on them, because as the veteran said earlier, ‘You’re not ready.’ If we don’t get nothing out of this, you’re not ready for what comes next. We’re from Los Angeles, and LAPD is the most murderous police force in the country, and so we’re used to this. California police kill the most people in the country.”

Daniel, a local resident, told the City Council members, “Y’all ain’t getting no thanks from me, because y’all ain’t did shit yet. Since 2015, 22 people have been killed by the police officers in this area, and no charges have been brought against anybody.”

David Moore, the Socialist Equality Party candidate for Senate in the California elections, attended the meeting, passed out election campaign statements and spoke with protesters about the class issues involved in police violence.

Moore spoke with Fanny Barnes, 73, a resident of Citrus Heights in Sacramento County and a retired transportation worker.

“Police officers should be held accountable, just like any other human being, and they’re not, and they never have been,” Barnes declared. “Will it ever happen? I doubt it. Under the system that we’re under, no, I don’t think so.”

Barnes fondly recalled marching with Martin Luther King, Jr. and listening to his speeches as a youth. When Moore noted that King was assassinated as he began to speak out against the Vietnam War, Barnes commented, “The Vietnamese people never did

anything to Black people, or even the whites. So why should you pick up your gear, go way over there, and fight these people that never did anything to you? It’s common sense. We need to wake up as a people and stop doing some of the things that this country wants us to do.”

Barnes described the charade of the City Council meetings, which are simply a means of letting off steam, and said, “The system has to be torn down, and we need to rebuild another. It’s not equal, and as long as things aren’t equal, there ain’t no justice, no peace!”

When Moore described the campaign platform that he’ll be running on, Barnes emphatically declared, “I’ll be voting for you. I’m so sick of this Democratic Party and Republican Party, they’re all the same! You know, sure, you put a Black man in there like Obama, he didn’t do that much. It’s all about getting rid of this system. Unite the working class! I agree with you.”

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