

Unite the working class against police killings!

By David Moore: SEP candidate for US Senate from California
19 April 2018

As the Socialist Equality Party's candidate for US Senate in California, I condemn the killing of unarmed Diante Yarber in Barstow, California, on April 5. Such acts of wanton police brutality are an attack on the entire working class and must be met with a unified political response.

Police shot and killed Diante, 26, as he dropped his cousin and friends off at a Walmart. They sent a barrage of up to 30 bullets into his car, claiming that he was driving toward them. Diante, a young father of three daughters, was hit approximately 24 times in what his lawyer said this week was the worst case of "excessive and unnecessary force" that he had ever seen. A passenger in the car was also seriously wounded.

The killing of Yarber follows the brutal gunning down of Stephon Clark in March, as he stood unarmed in his grandparents' backyard in Sacramento, California. Officers claimed they thought Clark's cell phone was a gun and shot him in the leg, side, and six times in the back.

In February, sheriff's deputies shot and killed Paul Mono, 65, in his home in Laguna Woods, California. Mono had threatened a contractor working on his house earlier that day for going over budget, though the contractor said he did not feel in danger. Police responded well after the incident, entered the house, then confronted and shot Mono.

In January, Warren Ragudo, 34, died in police custody after being tased at his father's house in Daly City just outside San Francisco. Ragudo's father had called police about his son's erratic behavior. Ragudo did not attack officers but was "uncooperative" and after being tased in the back, stopped breathing.

Such incidents are repeated innumerable times throughout the United States. So far this year, 379 people have been killed by police. It has been four years since the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson,

Missouri, sparked nationwide protests, but the police continue to take lives so regularly you can mark time by it: 1,200 a year, 100 a month, 3.5 a day.

California, the most populous and most impoverished state in the country, also has the largest number of police killings, with 51 reported in the media so far this year.

The Trump administration has repeatedly denounced demonstrations against police violence, including last year's protests by players in the National Football League, in effect giving police a green light to beat and kill with impunity. But Trump is only intensifying policies pursued under the Obama administration, which presided over the imposition of militarized police crackdowns on demonstrators in Ferguson and Baltimore, and repeatedly sided with the police in cases brought before the Supreme Court.

However each incident of police murder begins, they end the same way. The police are put on administrative leave, and, after an "investigation," the overwhelming majority are not charged with any crime. Those that do get charged are almost never convicted. Between 2005 and 2017, only 80 officers nationwide were charged with murder or manslaughter; of those 80, only 35 percent were convicted.

Popular anger over police killings has not diminished despite a systematic effort to smother opposition and channel it behind the Democratic Party. Black Lives Matter and other groups centered on identity politics have pushed the false claim that the fundamental cause of police violence is racism and can be addressed through various reforms like body cameras, hiring more minority police officers, and sensitivity training.

Whatever role racism may play in any particular act of police violence, it is not the fundamental cause. Those killed by police come from every racial and ethnic background. The majority of people killed by police are white, while Native-Americans and

African-Americans are killed at the highest rate. In major cities across the country, like San Francisco, racially diverse police departments match the pattern of brutality nationwide. The one group spared from the unrelenting wave of police murder is the wealthy.

Where “reforms” have been implemented, as in Sacramento, it has not slowed police violence. The officers who shot Stephon Clark in the back did so with their body cameras rolling and under the supervision of an African American police chief.

The regular and pervasive character of police violence follows necessarily from the position of police in a capitalist society. They exist to defend the political and economic system in the United States, a system of immense inequality and brutality.

In the United States today, the richest three billionaires have as much wealth as the poorest half of the population, approximately 160 million people. The police exist to defend that inequality.

The US government has openly engaged in torture, assassination, and illegal spying against US citizens and across the globe. Under successive Republican and Democratic administrations, the government has waged aggressive war against civilian populations. The police exist to defend the criminality of the elite from social opposition.

Under the guise of “anti-terrorism,” the US government has prepared for mass strikes and protests by militarizing the police. Under the Obama administration, billions of dollars in surplus military, including armored cars, uniforms, and assault rifles were funneled into law enforcement agencies across the country, and famously put them into use against protesters in Ferguson.

Demonstrations against police violence are erupting again, this time amid the growth of working-class opposition in the United States, with a wave of strikes and protests by education workers in West Virginia, Oklahoma, Arizona and other states, as well as nationwide demonstrations against school shootings.

Social opposition is building up within the working class. But at every turn, workers confront the efforts of the Democratic Party and trade unions to shut down and demobilize popular opposition by channeling it back into the political establishment.

Every social problem, whether it be underfunded schools, low wages, unending police violence or school

shootings, has systemic roots. An end to police repression is possible only through the establishment of a society based on genuine equality, in which the economy serves the interests of working people, not the rapacious profit interests of the banks and corporations. This means the fight for socialism. The SEP campaign is dedicated to laying the basis for such a movement among all sections of the working class.

To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>