



The Defender

'zine of the Workers Defense Alliance

• Twin Cities •

Fall 2020

MINNEAPOLIS: FROM **UPRISING** TO **POPULAR POWER**



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Defend the Uprising!

On May 26th, the people of Minneapolis rose up against the lynching of a 46-year old unemployed Black worker, George Floyd, by the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) in broad daylight. Masses of people, mainly young, mainly poor, and mainly people of color took to the streets. They surrounded and battled the Third Precinct, looted capitalist enterprise, and lit fires that were seen around the world.

This Uprising of the Youth and the Poor won more concrete gains and did more to change the debate around white supremacy, policing, and direct action than decades of lobbying, voting, and protest. Now the politicians, big business, and the media are trying to rewrite our victories and peddle fear and confusion to block further progress by the most oppressed.

What did the Uprising Achieve?

The four cops who murdered Floyd - Derek Chauvin, J Alexander Kueng, Thomas Lane, and Tou Thao - were fired on May 26, the day after the murder. It took three days of massive protests for Chauvin to be arrested, on May 29. After another five days, the state arrested the other three cops.

The weeks following Floyd's murder have seen a growing movement to remove police from schools. The University of Minnesota announced it was terminating its contracts with the MPD on May 27. Minneapolis and St. Paul public schools followed suit in June, thanks to organizing efforts led by BIPOC students, families, and teachers. Similar efforts are happening across the country.

Discussions about reforming, defunding, and even abolishing the police have taken hold in cities across the country. The Minneapolis City Council proposed a city charter amendment that would replace the MPD with a community safety department. In Seattle, city councillors proposed cutting the Seattle Police Department's budget by 50%

Racist cultural symbols, like Confederate statues and certain sports team mascots, have been publicly attacked in unprecedented ways. Statues of Columbus, Confederate "heroes," and other violent colonizers have been torn down in cities around the country - including St. Paul, where a group of Native organizers toppled the statue of Columbus. The Washington Football Team finally gave in to years-long pressure to change its name, which had been an anti-Native slur since 1933.

The most important achievement is the autonomous spirit of revolt and self-organization we've seen on so many fronts. We've seen community members band together to hold George Floyd Square (38th & Chicago) - organizing meals, sanitation, and their own security

presence, building community bonds while keeping the police out. We've seen mass encampments of homeless folks in city parks resist the city's attempts to evict them. We've seen workers organize solidarity actions. We've seen neighborhoods organize armed community self-defense.

Counter-Attack by the System

In attempts to delegitimize the protests, the state and the media have been releasing misleading "crime" statistics since the early Uprising. They have, at various times, claimed that the riots were started by "outside agitators," "white anarchists," or "white supremacists." Governor Walz, Minneapolis mayor Jacob Frey, and St. Paul mayor Melvin Carter all announced that most of the protest arrestees were "agitators" from outside the TC. They later walked back their statements when it was revealed that the vast majority of arrestees were local. To anyone who was at the protests, these were blatant attempts to spin them as something other than what they were: communities, largely Black and Brown ones, standing up against the violence levied against them by the state and capitalism.

The Minneapolis Charter Commission decided to take an extra 90 days to review the amendment dismantling the police. This moves their decision past the deadline for the amendment to be added to this year's ballot, blatantly blocking progress on dismantling the MPD.

The state is working on retaking the spaces the people have been maintaining since the Uprising. The City of Minneapolis has set its sights on the homeless encampments in Powderhorn Park. Residents and friends have faced increasing repression as they have resisted the city's orders to leave the park, including one mass arrest of over 20 residents and supporters. The police have also announced their plans to take back George Floyd Square. Community members have labeled this an attempt to return the city to "normal" - the same normal that killed George Floyd.

Taking the Uprising Forward

Though the explosiveness of its early days is over, the Uprising continues to burn bright in the Twin Cities. The revolutionary spirit of self-organization we've seen in the past few months is not easily extinguished. All around the cities we can see organizers continuing their work, building the networks, experience, and capacity they need to keep fighting for the long haul. The spirit of revolt lives on in the copwatch patrols, neighborhood defense groups, workplace committees, and mutual aid networks being built across the cities.

Voices from the Barricades at George Floyd Square

On Memorial Day weekend, George Floyd, a 46-year old African-American bouncer, unemployed since COVID-19, was detained by Minneapolis Police outside Cup Foods on 38th St & Chicago Ave in south Minneapolis for allegedly passing a counterfeit \$20 bill. Mr. Floyd was put down on the street - right where a #5 bus stops - and murdered by a cop pressing his knee into Mr. Floyd's neck while a crowd of onlookers pleaded for the police to stop.

38th & Chicago is an important intersection in south Minneapolis - especially to poor and working-class folks who attend church, update their cell phones, get Chinese, do laundry, or fill up their tanks on that corner. The intersection brings together four neighborhoods: Bancroft, Bryant, Central, and Powderhorn - and is the heart of the historic and resilient southside Black community.

The lynching of George Floyd tore open the facade covering white-supremacist capitalist rule in Minneapolis and neighboring communities - it brought people out in the streets and at 38th & Chicago - the people have stayed. Building barricades, painting murals, memorializing those murdered by police, serving meals, playing music, squashing beefs, booting fascists, and holding ground.

The interviews here are from two people from the Community who have given over big chunks of their life to the struggle to hold and defend George Floyd Square...

Could you say a little bit about who you are and your background?

Sage: I've lived in Southside Minneapolis since I was about 8 years old. I know the city like the back of my hand. I've been in the iww community for about the same amount of time. I've also been a big part of the underground music scene: punk, rap, and raves. I also know a lot of amazing street artists - shout out YBG!

Marcia: I have lived and taught in South Minneapolis for the last twenty-two years. Before I was an English teacher, I was an NCO in the Marines.

How did the murder of George Floyd hit you, personally?

Sage: I have lived next to that block my whole life. When I heard about it, it hurt my heart to the fuckin bone. I already knew that it was gonna be a big problem right away when I heard it. When I found out where he worked and that I actually had met him before, that made it way deeper for me. And then on top of that I just knew that this was going to be a huge problem for the community because I am mad. I've had cops in that same neighborhood put their gun in my face and told

me that if I say another word they were gonna shoot me in the face, so I know I was mad. I already know if I had it that bad in that neighborhood, I can't even imagine how these old heads feel. They had to deal with this shit for way longer than I have and at this point this shit supposed to been changed so it's just crazy.



Sage at George Floyd Square

Marcia: My house is 260 steps from Cup Foods, door to door. I can go and pick up an item while still having food on the burner. I can see that corner from my sunroom window. The morning after his murder, I realized that a girl I taught had filmed it and my concern for her melded with my outrage about the murder of this black man. The callousness of our society towards black lives and black psyches has been demonstrated on that corner time and time again. It's terrorism.

Can you describe how the George Floyd Square Memorial "autonomous zone" came to be - and your role in it?

Sage: To be completely honest, I do not know how it came to be and I was too busy in the riots doing stuff for the riots for the first three days. So after the riots started to calm down, everything kind of chilled out over there. That's when I ended up going over to the Autonomous Zone. After getting a little break from

the riots, I saw that people were doing security there, so I decided to see if I could hop in on it. I ended up getting right onto the security and then it just went on from there. Ended up going really, really hard on the security team, getting to know everybody on the whole block. It was really crazy getting to know everybody in the whole city, like getting to meet almost everybody from every part of the city. And not even just our city. I met people from Australia, people from Africa, all over the world. People are coming to see what we are doing. It is just fucking amazing to see that.

Marcia: When the protestors flooded the square, my contribution was simply to hand out masks because of the threat of the coronavirus. Then, I appointed myself chief of parking on my block because wave after wave of mourners and protestors continued to arrive. By the time I realized that many were not leaving, I saw the shift of that intersection from a rally point, to a fortified place of resistance. The protestors occupied the space, standing in solidarity, day and night, despite gas attack and rubber bullets and the National Guard rolling in. I realized that the people had laid claim to this piece of Minneapolis and would not surrender it.

It was when the ad hoc barricades were fortified with concrete ones, that I knew we were in it for the long haul. That was when the mutual aid, communal meals, field medic stations, and the band of security all made up the city of FloydTown, the Autonomous Zone.

The police were told they weren't welcome, the phrase "F12" written on every conceivable surface, but other services were denied us as well.

In the first days of the Uprising, we did not even have mail service. It truly felt like we'd been cut off from the city. However, we negotiated trash pickup and sanitation services, then set about keeping the barricades place safe, secure, and sacred.

Why has this memorial space been so important? How has it functioned in relation to the broader Uprising?

Sage: I think it is so important because we need to see how much of the community is actually out here for us. It shows you you aren't alone in this crazy-ass time. Shows that people really give a fuck and will support the community.

Marcia: This memorial space has been held as a place of protest and a place of pride in the solidarity of the diverse group of people standing up for Black, brown, and Indigenous people. People have made pilgrimages from all over the world to this site to see the flashpoint for a global reckoning with inequity and state brutality.

You see even the most casual tourist experience Mari Hernandez's Street of Names and openly weep for the unavenged dead. This site has symbolic power. It is already a national historic site because the nation has made it so.

How have the police treated the space?

Sage: The police have acted too nice when they are there, or have been militant. They have walked over the blood of people that have been shot and killed out there and act like nothing happened. I've chased down drones and had undercover talk to me. I've seen them in unmarked vehicles. They are the terrorists out here spreading lies, starting shit, and if you don't think they are in Cup Foods's pocket... I'm sorry.



Marcia at George Floyd Square

Marcia: The police have played a sly propaganda game. They have played up to the press the idea of "hostile crowds" preventing them from entering either the barricades area or surrounding streets in order to justify a work slow-down and refusal of services to the predominantly white citizens in the surrounding blocks. This attempt to gin up resentment and a backlash to the movement has been further aided by a deliberate, concerted effort by people told to shoot fireworks and rounds into the air for weeks on end to set off the shot spotter and flood the precinct with

calls. It might as well been called “Operation: How ya like them apples?”. The irony is that the police has a near-constant presence with plainclothes officers and aerial drone cameras. They also circle the surrounding blocks all day, yet refuse to respond to 911 calls from the harried citizens who still reach for the phone at every sound of gunfire. It’s an op. Plain and simple.

What have you been most proud of and encouraged by? - and what have been the biggest problems or challenges in the George Floyd Square?

Sage: I’ve been so proud to see the community come together. This is one thing that I never thought I’d ever see in my generation: to see our community come together and fight this hard, as hard as we have fought, for what we believe in. This time the biggest problem I have had personally, to a certain point: am I helping the community at this point, or am I helping these gangs that are owning this block just do what they wanna do? Sell drugs, steal stuff from people and all that. And it’s hard cuz some of them I respect, but they are using the shit out of us for a lot of stuff and that’s sad cuz that’s not why I’m out there. I’m out there, sure, for the people, but when some of the people only care about money and power, am I really helping the fight I’m fighting for?



Marcia: I have been really encouraged by the diversity of the protestors who gather to protest police brutality. That so many people are putting their bodies on the line to stand in solidarity with the marginalized folks in this country. I’m proud to see signs that acknowledge missing, exploited, and ignored indigenous women. I cried when a brother held a sign that said, “If we ain’t for trans Black people, we ain’t for Black people.” I am overwhelmed daily by the momentum. It is there. Even in the quiet of the square, there may be a march of thousands in downtown or hundreds in a suburb. We are serious about this liberation. Yet, in the microcosm of this Autonomous Zone, I see

the fine working of capitalism and blunt instrument of the violence that it can wield in the form of gunfire. This prevailing narrative of lawlessness and danger had been orchestrated with the cooperation of the powers-that-be-and-always-been in the 30s blocks of South Minneapolis. We have sat and watched them all work seamlessly to get the desired effect: a return to status quo. It would be actually admirable if it weren’t so tragic. It’s like watching Birth of a Nation in real life.

How has this made you think we could do without police?

Sage: I know for a fact that if my generation wanted to step up and just take a little bit more responsibility we wouldn’t need the police. What it really comes down to: are we goin take the steps to care for each other and take that responsibility to not walk away when we hear someone askin for help on the street, not just think that all we need to think about is ourself?

What do you think is coming next for this movement in Minneapolis?

Sage: What comes next? Now that is the question, isn’t it? I’m not sure. Through what I’ve seen, I’m not sure if a lot is going to happen moving forward. I see a lot of the older people and my generation not getting along very well. It’s because the older generation thinks they know more than us and won’t give us the chance to stand up and show them we can back them up. This is the thing, this new generation is different. It is true the older generation probably does know a bit more than us, seen more than us, but how are we supposed to show y’all what we know and what we are capable of if our ideas are shut down right away? We are the next you, and that’s what I feel both generations don’t realize. If we can’t figure out how to get these generations together, there will be no fight. We both need to learn how to come together and have conversation without animosity. Cuz if we don’t, who are we fighting for?

Marcia: The next step is picking up the gauntlet again. The city should be wincing in anticipation of the slap, the challenge, the calling out, and the showing up. If I have to take a saws-all and take the 38th and Chicago sign to our next place of occupation, our next protest site, I will. This is just the beginning.

You’ve described yourself as an abolitionist. How has this experience informed your views?

Marcia: Considering the overt, covert, and tacit cooperation of the police with folks that they will eventually indict, I say: throw it all out and start fresh. We have to remake and reimagine what our social services (including apprehension) look and feel and function like. I cannot believe we cannot do it.

But it must be dismantled as it stands now. This belief solidified itself AFTER 63 days in the Zone, when I’d been a tepid reformist at the beginning.

Abolition and the Movement Against Police Brutality

The heroic Minneapolis Uprising, provoked by the public lynching of George Floyd, has shaken the entire world. Things that seemed impossible just a couple months ago, are now openly discussed and debated at all levels of society.

A prime example is the slogan “Abolish the Police” - which arose with the flames and smoke from the militant protests on Lake Street. “Abolish the Police” was the major, defining slogan of the Uprising. It served as a marker of how radical and defiant the movement had become - and how unwilling the young people were to accept the usual kind words and crumbs from the politicians.

The role of police in society should be clear - it is to protect the rich and powerful and preserve the status quo. This is why Black police chiefs, training programs, and civilian oversight have never made a real difference - the underlying purpose of the police is still the same. When you know the history of the police in the United States, from the Slave Patrols to the deputized thugs who harassed and intimidated the immigrant working-

our comrades in the former IWW African Peoples Caucus - both raised this slogan in the militant protest movements for Justice for Jamar Clark and Philando Castile over 4 years ago.

We promoted abolition as part of our approach of building both militant street resistance to police brutality and organizing “working-class defense groups” to help communities protect themselves from the police and anti-social community violence. For us, the slogan helped explain the role of the police in our society and the folly of trying to reform it into something better. We did not propose “Abolish the Police” as a legislative measure to go lobby liberal politicians, but as the result of the revolutionary struggle of the working-class.

Reformist Abolition?

Since the struggles around Jamar and Philando, other abolitionist groups have become more prominent in the Twin Cities. Some of them, like MPD 150,

have produced excellent materials detailing the brutal history of the MPD and inviting the community to envision a world without police. New groups like Black Visions Collective and Reclaim the Block have been effectively challenging the power structure to justify any funding of the murderous MPD. But these new abolitionist groups have also pretty much removed revolution from the equation of how to get rid of the police. Instead of preparing the fighting capacity of the working-class and oppressed communities, the focus



class, to today's riot police and assassins - it all starts to make sense. The Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) is not on our side and never could be. We should focus on building the capacity of working-class communities to resist the police and defend our neighborhoods - not tweak the existing repressive apparatus.

The Workers Defense Alliance supports the slogan “Abolish the Police”. Our predecessor organization, the General Defense Committee (GDC) - and also

is on “organizing the politicians” to defund and (maybe) dismantle the police.

The debate around abolishing the MPD now regrettably centers around the strategy of several Minneapolis City Councilors to amend the city charter and take out the provisions that mandate a police department and a minimum number of cops. They say they want to replace the MPD with a new “public safety department” that would emphasize social services, but still retain a smaller number of law enforcement officers.

This new agency would be under great pressure to evolve back into the same kind of repressive apparatus the MPD was. If it couldn't do that fast enough, the Hennepin County Sheriff and private security forces would start to fill the gap for the power structure.

Clearly this is not the kind of "abolition" that abolitionists and revolutionaries fight for, even if it does show the power of the Uprising to change the debate. Unfortunately, the longer-term community-based and leftwing anti-police brutality groups - all who have made major contributions to the struggle against police murders and violence - are not providing a solid alternative to abolition-lite.

No Alternatives?

The Racial Justice Network, with the NAACP, had a press conference to oppose the charter amendment under the guise of supporting Chief Arradondo - the MPD's first Black police chief. They argued that Arradondo had not been given enough time to make changes to the department - and insinuated that the MPD was under attack as a *Black-led institution*. Nothing could be further from the truth. It has become standard fare for the system to appoint Black chiefs around the country - and nothing ever changes. That's because the system is still the system, and the function of the police is still the function of the police. And while Arradondo is smarter, and more charismatic than the local politicians - he is not a good guy. Five people of color have been killed by the MPD during Arradondo's first three years in power - and he attempted to lie about the cause of George Floyd's murder, until the video of his death went viral. People are going to have to decide whether they support the Chief or the people - you can't do both.

Communities United Against Police Brutality (CUAPB) has opposed the charter amendment to eliminate the MPD on the grounds that the replacement proposals are poorly written - but this misses the point entirely. Our emphasis should be on doing as much damage to the white supremacist institution of the MPD as possible - not waiting for some perfect replacement from the politicians. CUAPB's alternative to abolition is a long list of reforms to the MPD - some might be better than what we have, and some are downright offensive, like suggesting that cops need more sleep so they'll be less brutal (!). But in either case, this approach ignores the role of the police in our society and tries to return us to a time before the Uprising and the popularity of police abolition.

The Twin Cities Coalition for Justice 4 Jamar (which the GDC used to participate in several years ago) actually organized a lobby campaign to stop the city charter from being amended, thus maintaining the status quo for the MPD (!). They have dressed up this betrayal of the Uprising by arguing that the City Council can't be trusted, that police can't be abolished under capitalism,

and that what's really needed is so-called "community-control" of the MPD. This is a thoroughly dishonest and sectarian argument. Of course the City Council can't be trusted - but that doesn't mean that the government won't sometimes concede to popular pressure. For instance, the City Council previously passed a watered-down minimum wage increase in response to the Fight for \$15 campaign. Should we have lobbied the City Council not to pass the wage increase because it didn't go far enough? But the Coalition's alternative is actually more conservative than the City Council's plan. The Coalition proposes a Civilian Police Accountability Council (CPAC), modeled after a campaign in Chicago. This campaign's strategy is to get support from the City Council and/or amend the city charter - the exact same approach they hypocritically criticize when it comes to defund/disband efforts. There was no sentiment in the Uprising for "Community Control" of the police - people know that the various attempts at civilian oversight have all been frauds. CPAC supporters argue this would be different because it would have an elected Board. But why would this Board have any more of a radical character than the City Council elected by the same voters?

CPAC does not get rid of the police or even cut the police department budget. Instead it creates a big new city government bureaucracy that will supposedly hold the police accountable to the community. But if it's utopian to think the police can be abolished under capitalism, it's equally naive to think the community can exercise "control" over the murderous MPD. Any CPAC bureaucracy with its middle-class staff, attorneys, investigators, and other specialists would actually have a material interest in the continuation of the MPD - not its abolition.

Our Approach

So what should our approach be to the City Council's maneuvers? First we should avoid getting bogged down in the lobbying at city hall. These efforts are designed to pull activists off the street and into the logic of system-politics. It was the Uprising that put this discussion on the table, not the politicians. Let's keep our focus on the communities and class that carried out the rebellion. Second, we should aggressively promote the concept of Abolition of the Police - not in a watered-down, reformist way, but in a clearly argued revolutionary framework that includes building up working-class defense organizations and expropriating needed resources from the rich. We should expose attempts to label things "abolition" that are clearly not. We should also get better at discussing and debating the real questions, concerns, and criticisms many people have about abolition of the police. Third, and most importantly, we must push ahead with the building up of working-class defense organizations and other autonomous spheres of working-class power.

WE GO ME FOR



FOR
THE
FUTURE

Bryant Neighborhood Assemblies

In the wake of the George Floyd Uprising, many neighborhoods began to organize themselves. Mass meetings were held in parks across the city. In most places the main concern was community safety - and in many neighborhoods this was reduced to typical and reactionary concern for the property of homeowners. But in several neighborhoods, there was serious conversations about fighting racism, not relying on the cops, and allying with the protest movement.

In the Bryant Neighborhood in south Minneapolis, Community assemblies have met every Saturday since the Uprising. Bryant is a majority working-class people of color neighborhood, home to a historic Black community with a strong legacy of families, churches, fraternal organizations, small businesses, and other institutions. Bryant is one of the four neighborhoods that meet at the intersection of 38th & Chicago, where George Floyd was murdered.

The Assemblies have drawn between 50-100 neighbors each week to Phelps park, where participants stretch out on blankets or sit in lawn chairs to keep a responsible social distance amid the COVID-19 epidemic. Each assembly has included a panel of speakers followed by small group discussions. The Assemblies' "conversations are rooted in justice and the abolition of white supremacy and racial capitalism", according to the Bryant Neighborhood Organization (BNO).

The Assembly topics have ranged from a history of the neighborhood's Black Community; the violence of

gentrification; the future of 38th St.; Reimagining Safety without the police; and the non-profit industrial complex.

While the Assemblies were energized by the Minneapolis Uprising, the seeds for this organizing lay with a core of community activists who have been active in Bryant for several years. These organizers, working through the BNO had strong Black Liberationist and anti-racist commitments and challenged the typical white/property-owner focus of most official neighborhood groups. BNO organized community safety meetings without the police, challenged the new Friendship Co-op Grocery to make concrete pledges to the community, and envisions a Black economic & cultural corridor along E. 38th street.

The Future of 38th & Chicago remains up in the air - will it be a memorial to George Floyd that empowers the Black Community and broader multi-racial working-class of the area? Or will it be just a unique historical marker swamped by gentrification? The Bryant Neighborhood Assemblies may have something to say about this.

What if similar assemblies were being organized in neighborhoods across the city? What kind of power could a dozen strong assemblies leverage against the police, politicians and corporations?

And when can we start thinking about democratic assemblies in the communities and workplaces replacing the system all-together? Bringing real power back into the hands of working-class people?

BNO presents
Bryant
Neighborhood
Organization
www.welovebryant.org

Join our neighbors.
Learn Bryant's history.
Examine our present.
Imagine our future.



what does
**JUSTICE IN OUR
COMMUNITY**
look like?

a summer community conversation series
at **Phelps Park**

Saturdays at 11:00am

(on the corner of E 39th St. and Park Ave S)

*bring a blanket or a chair and something to drink

*wear a mask and plan to give people space

Stillwater Restaurant Workers Stand-Up Against White Supremacists

On June 27th, Sophia Rashid, a Muslim woman, took her four-year old daughter out to eat in Stillwater, a town on the St Croix River about 20 miles east of St. Paul. Stillwater has two main industries: bars & entertainment - and the Stillwater state prison. The prison, where human beings are forced to work at twelve cents an hour and face punishing medical neglect during the pandemic, is a breeding ground for both multi-racial solidarity against state-sponsored slavery - and segregation and white supremacy. That night downtown Stillwater would be made unsafe by bikers with ties to a white supremacist prison gang - sparking a strong reaction from Stillwater workers and residents.

As Sophia and her daughter enjoyed their meal, she noticed several men motioning at them and saying things like “we’re watching you.” The men wore vests declaring themselves to be members of the Aryan Cowboy Brotherhood, a white supremacist prison gang and motorcycle club active mostly in Minnesota with some presence in Ohio and Kentucky. There are conflicting reports, but some indicate that the ACB was in town to meet one of their members being released from the prison.



As Sophia describes in her facebook post that went viral later that day, the servers at the restaurant immediately offered to defend Sophia and walk her to her car. As Sophia, her daughter, and the servers made their way to her car, a group of

nazi bikers crossed the street towards them. The racists were soon backed up by their buddies, with multiple small groups of bikers in the area intimidating the women and making threatening comments. The servers brought Sophia to the Hotel Lora, where staff said they would protect her.

The nazi harassment brought a strong reaction from anti-racists in the Stillwater community. Local resident Marita Metcalf and the EastMetro Unites Against Racism in Honor of George Floyd facebook group organized a rally against racism downtown on July 4th. The Stillwater for Racial Justice group, formed in June, also organized a rapid

response network - a communications loop allowing people to mobilize and defend the community whenever racist harassment is reported. The day after the anti-racist rally, the still-forming network assembled to back-up a local shopkeeper and worker, facing harassment from racists who were upset that the owner had spoken at the rally and put a Black Lives Matter sign in the store window.



Stillwater students have also been galvanized to act, with 28 Black students that attended or graduated from Stillwater Area High School writing a set of demands for changes in the school district.

When members of Stillwater for Racial Justice reached out to the Workers Defense Alliance, we offered advice and an info-sheet for service workers to recognize fascist groups who might come to their workplace. The WDA and the Twin Cities Solidarity Network are also working with bar and service workers, union members, and anti-racists in the greater Twin Cities Metro area to create a training for service staff to identify white supremacists and take action to keep their workplaces, customers, and communities safe



from fascist threats and violence. If you are interested in getting the info sheet or contributing to the training, please contact the Twin Cities Solidarity Network: tcsolnet@protonmail.com.

Five “I”s for a City Beyond Policing: A Message to Defense Groups in Minneapolis



In the wake of the murder of George Floyd, the wrath of the people of Minneapolis, Saint Paul and surrounding communities has been unleashed. As plans to defund and (perhaps) abolish the Minneapolis Police Department continue, the police have withdrawn their active presence from some parts of Minneapolis. This is to be welcomed. The police never really protected the majority of us and our neighbors, especially those of us marginalized by race, poverty, country of origin, gender, and/or sexuality. It is literally, legally (by repeated court decision), not their job to protect the people, and for a long time now, they have been actively harming people with no repercussions whatsoever.

Let's be clear: Reforming and regulating the police is not what we want. We can do much better than prolonging the life of this doomed, repressive institution, but to do better, we need to plan how to do better.

Many people's attention is now turning to the formation of armed self-defense groups to protect our communities. This development should be welcomed and encouraged. It is the legal and moral right of the people to bear arms in legitimate self-defense. However, this needs to be done right if it's going to be done at all. Here are a few guidelines to consider.

Inspiration. Our motivation should be to protect all of the people in our communities, and especially those marginalized in society at present. No exceptions.

Protecting the people means shielding them from physical harm as well as conflict and emotional trauma, not swaggering around with weapons in a misguided display of machismo. We don't look for trouble. We look to keep trouble away from our neighbors and loved ones. We de-escalate conflicts by open, humble and generous communication with our neighbors. Whenever possible and practical, without putting others at greater risk, we retreat before resorting to any kind of physical force. We are not there to be cops. We are there to be friends, and to build peaceful communities through friendship and trust.

Similarly, we cannot and should not ever use lethal force to defend private property, except against attacks that endanger the lives of the people who live and work there. Black Lives Matter. Property does not.

Independence. Community self-defense groups should have no ties with law enforcement, with politicians, or with non-profit corporations. We all know that the Republicans serve the racists and the rich, but the Democrats are not our friends either. The Democratic Party in particular hand out millions of dollars in loans, development aid, and tax breaks to large and small businesses that prey on low-income workers in our communities, while repeatedly trying to end the freedom of the people to protect themselves through the legal possession and carry of firearms. We have no business allying themselves with Democrats and I suspect they wouldn't want us anyway. Similarly the police. We cannot simultaneously cooperate with, and oppose the existence of, the people and the institution who violently murdered George Floyd, Philando Castile, Jamar Clark, Fong Lee, and many others.

Insurance. Without any particular respect for the police, politicians, or courts of law, we nonetheless must follow the letter of the law in order to minimize our vulnerability when practicing armed community self-defense. If we choose to carry firearms, we must purchase them legally and obtain carry permits from the State of Minnesota. We must be aware of the legal limits for use of deadly force by private citizens. We must seek out instructors and train diligently, both by dry-firing weapons at home with dummy rounds and by regularly



visiting the shooting ranges that Minneapolis will not allow within city limits. If we are going to be out on the streets in a security role, we should try to buy and wear body armor to reduce risk of fatal gunshot wounds. No one should be carrying firearms, let alone serving in a security role, when under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Inclusiveness. People from every part of our neighborhoods must be encouraged to take part in community defense and to give their consent to it, even if they choose not to be personally involved. This must be true regardless of their race, age, gender, family status, religion, ethnicity, or nation of origin. Priority must be given to the involvement of those who are marginalized by the capitalist system, especially Black, Indigenous, and other formerly or currently colonized people.

Some Black, Indigenous and other people of color may prefer to form their own groups with others of a common experience. This is a natural, healthy part of decolonization, and should be encouraged and supported. There is nothing preventing an inclusive, neighborhood-oriented group from working together in coalition with identity-focused groups that prefer to maintain their independence.



Improvement. Personally, collectively, neighborhood-wide and movement-wide, we all need to be continually improving our abilities and capacity. We learn to carry first aid kits as well as pistols. We study first aid and CPR as well as firearms use. We learn de-escalation and conflict resolution as well as physical self-defense. We memorize and teach the four cardinal rules of firearm safety, and the four “D”s of threat response: Deter, Detect, Delay/De-escalate, and Defend Deliberately and Decisively.

As the police fade out and disappear, we can build strength, community, solidarity and security in Minneapolis in a way that they never could.

Syria Solidarity

“The fight against racism is a human and universal cause that affects us all.” These are the words of artist Aziz Asmar, who along with his friend Anas Hamdoun painted a tribute to George Floyd on a destroyed building in Binnish, Syria.



Binnish is in the province of Idlib, which has become the last refuge for anti-authoritarian Syrians over nine years of brutal counterrevolution by the fascist Assad regime and its international imperialist and jihadist partners. Since rising up for freedom and dignity in 2011, everyday Syrians have been systematically slaughtered, disappeared, tortured, and displaced — yet they continue to resist.

Idlib is now home to three million civilians, over half of whom fled there from other parts of the country. The province has been facing brutal aerial and artillery bombardment by the Syrian regime and its Russian ally for years, while reactionary religious militias have repeatedly attempted to co-opt and crush the grassroots democratic structures and survival programs Syrians have painstakingly established there.

Despite all this, upon receiving news of George Floyd’s murder by MPD cops, Asmar and Hamdoun created a tribute. “We also wanted to draw attention to the suffocation here in Syria,” Asmar said, referring to the repeated use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime against the civilian population. “We have not been able to breathe here for a long time.”

“We do not intend to compare what is happening here with what happens in other places,” emphasized Asmar, “but for us it is important not to lose sight of what happens to the rest of humanity.” Efforts are underway to do a mural in Minneapolis in solidarity with the struggle in Syria.

Seward Co-op Workers Walk-Out for Justice

The horrendous murder of George Floyd - and the powerful Uprising that followed - inspired action from some Twin Cities workers. On June 16th, workers at the Seward Co-op Grocery store on East Franklin Ave staged a brief walk-out in the parking lot to demand Justice for George Floyd and the abolition of the police department.



Some 30 workers joined the walk-out and were met by an equally sized group of community supporters for a rally in the parking lot. Dream, a worker from the produce department, was the first speaker: "We are gathered here today to protest the murder of George Floyd. The injustices inflicted upon our communities have gone on far too long, and we grow weary of the police getting away with a slap on the wrist, if even that." Taja, from the Wellness Department, reminded the assembly that Black Trans people continue to be killed in racist/transphobic attacks and that Pride was also born of a rebellion kicked off by Black Trans women.

A group of rank & file workers organized the walk-out and formulated demands. The workers demanded that both Seward Co-op and the UFCW sign on to community calls to defund and disband the MPD - and that the union specifically denounce Police Federation President Bob Kroll.

In the build-up to the action the UFCW shamefully tried to pressure the workers into calling it off. The Union Rep told workers that the action would poison the atmosphere for contract negotiations this Fall, that workers could be disciplined, and that the Local President wouldn't like it. To their credit, the worker weren't intimidated and pushed on with the action.



Union Reps who are beholden to the Union officers, and not the rank & file, often play the role of trying to check and contain workers militancy. We need workers' Unions to be directly controlled by membership - not conservative "leaders" and their staff who think they know better than those doing the actual work.

Other Workers Actions for Justice Across the Twin Cities

Twin Cities bus drivers with ATU Local 1005 refused to use their vehicles to facilitate mass arrests of protesters during the uprising. "I refuse to transport my class and radical youth to jail. An injury to one is an injury to all," said MTC worker Adam Burch.

AFSCME and other union workers led a protest at County Attorney Mike Freeman's home demanding the prosecution of Derek Chauvin and the other cops who killed George Floyd. "The unprecedented uprising of grief and rage over the murder of George Floyd has changed the landscape. Rank-and-file activists are pushing their unions to take action and more unions are encouraging their members to participate in actions as visible union members," wrote Cherrene Horuzak, of Local 3800 in Labor Notes

Telecom workers at the AT&T Tower in downtown Minneapolis walked off the job for 8 minutes and 46 seconds in a symbolic show of solidarity by CWA Local 7250.

Rank & File postal workers staged a march from a burned out post office to the site of George Floyd's murder. "You Can Rebuild a Post Office, But Not a Life", wrote Tyler Vasseur of Branch 9 of the Letter Carriers.

Workers at the Wedge Co-op on Lyndale Ave. in south Minneapolis organized a short walk-out and speak-out against police brutality and racism.

Cell Phone Security: Keeping Cops and Fash Out



You probably have things on your phone you wouldn't want a fascist or a cop to see: comrades' contact information, loved ones' addresses, logged-in social media accounts, and text messages, to name a few.

While you can't make it impossible for them to get into your phone, you can make it a pain. With every security measure you add, you make it more difficult for police/fascists to get your data. Fascists, alt-righters, and even the police have a limited amount of resources. If it's not relatively easy to get into your phone, they're going to have to give up eventually. The police probably aren't going to call in the password-cracking experts for someone who kicked over a trash can. The fash have even fewer resources. Make it harder for them, even if you can't make it impossible.

Most important: **make sure you have a password on your phone.** Make sure it automatically locks after a short period of not being used, and make sure you lock it before you put it away. Your password should be something secure, but something you can remember. If you can, **use a password with upper/lowercase letters, numbers, and special characters** rather than a numbers-only PIN. If you must use a PIN, make it long - 6 digits or more. **DO NOT use fingerprint, iris, or facial recognition to secure your phone.**

If possible, **encrypt your phone.** If your phone isn't encrypted, it's easier for a tech-savvy fascist or cop to download the data onto a computer and read it, even if you have a password on your phone. Encrypting it will garble the data so only a person with the password can read it. There should be instructions for encrypting your phone on the internet. If you need help, email arwg@protonmail.com.

The MPD uses Stingrays - fake cell phone towers that record your calls and messages. Since text messages and calls are not encrypted, they're able to read and/or listen in to what you're saying. You can make it harder for them by using **Signal, an encrypted text messaging app.** It encrypts your messages and calls, which keeps the police from reading them.

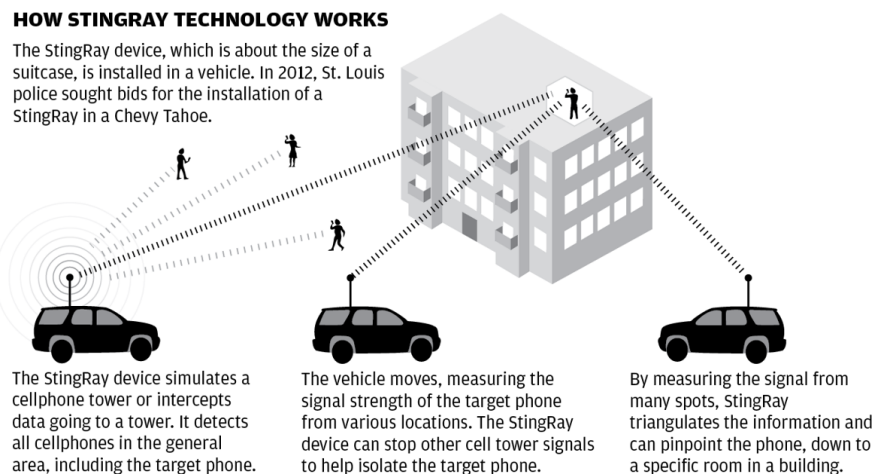
While it's smart to plan for the worst-case scenario, you should try to keep your phone from being taken in the first place. There's not much you can do to keep it from the police if you get arrested, but you can keep it from getting stolen by fascists. **Keep your phone in a secure pocket (e.g. front pants pocket, or a jacket pocket that zips/buttons), zipped compartment of a backpack, or a bag with a cross-body strap when you're not using it. Put it away when you're not actively using it** - for example, to film a police

interaction or send a secure message to a friend. **Stay aware of your surroundings**, even when you're using your phone.

In some cases, it's safer to leave your phone at home. Before you leave to go to the action, **it is a good idea not to bring your phone if you anticipate being in a situation where you are likely to get arrested, or if having your location tracked will put you in danger.** It's up to you to decide whether the benefits of bringing your phone outweigh the risks.

HOW STINGRAY TECHNOLOGY WORKS

The StingRay device, which is about the size of a suitcase, is installed in a vehicle. In 2012, St. Louis police sought bids for the installation of a StingRay in a Chevy Tahoe.



SOURCE: Various court records | Post-Dispatch

Oromo Community Takes the Streets

Hundreds of members of Minnesota's Oromo community took over I-94 on July 1st, and 1,500 took 35W ten days later, in powerful protests against the assassination of Hachalu Hundessa in Ethiopia. Hundessa was an iconic Oromo musician, activist, and former political prisoner closely associated with the struggle for democracy in Ethiopia and for the rights and freedom of the Oromo people.

The Oromo people are the largest ethnicity in Ethiopia and an oppressed nationality under the Ethiopian State. The Oromo people have had their language and religions banned by the Ethiopian State and faced ruthless military assaults aimed at extinguishing their movement for self-determination. There are approximately 30,000 Oromo people in the Twin Cities, making it one of the most important communities of the diaspora.

The protests here against the assassination of Hachalu Hundessa took place only a few weeks after the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent Uprising across the Twin Cities. Many Oromo people have been involved in the struggles against police brutality and for Black Lives, and while Oromos have been organizing here for decades, the Uprising was an undeniable catalyst for these actions.



As an Oromo community organizer from Saint Paul told the Sahan Journal: "With the George Floyd protest, I saw that anything is possible. Oromo liberation is Black liberation. Black liberation is Oromo liberation."



Introduction to the Workers Defense Alliance

The Workers Defense Alliance is a revolutionary network of working class people and autonomous councils. We organize on the job and in the streets to practice militant rank and file labor struggle and community self defense. Our roots are in the Twin Cities GDC and historical union defense guards, the labor movement, Anti-Racist Action, and various mutual aid and survival programs.

The Alliance is an abolitionist, anti-capitalist, anti-authoritarian, and anti-prison organization. We are committed to building and maintaining autonomous worker and tenant councils, defense bodies, and mutual aid projects. Our network fights against racism, sexism, queerphobia, and ableism in order to recognize that an injury to one is an injury to all. From this, we see that the liberation of each is bound up in the liberation of all.

We set out to unmake this nightmare world we're inheriting, and make a new one in the ashes of the old.

Website: <https://workersdefensealliance.org/>

Twitter: https://twitter.com/TC_WDA

Facebook: <https://facebook.com/TC.WorkersDefense>