

August 9: Mark the Anniversary of the Police Murder of Mike Brown and The Heroic Uprising That Followed It: It Was—AND /S—Right To Rebel!!

On August 9, it will be one year since a Ferguson, Missouri, cop, Darren Wilson executed Michael Brown for walking in the middle of the day on a sleepy street. Mike Brown was unarmed, running away, and had his hands up when he was shot multiple times and then his body was left lying dead in the street for four-and-a-half hours.

This brutal murder was met with outrage. For days and then weeks people took to the streets with defiance, rage, and righteous rebellion. People insisted on their rights and defended those rights in the street. Without the rebellion, this terrible state-done murder would just be another rerun of the same old, all-too-familiar story, the same murderous stuff that happens to Black and Latino youths over and over again. Very few people would have shared the grief of his parents for the terrible loss of this young man, at the very beginning of his life. The defiance and righteous rebellion challenged people all over the country to get off the sidelines and stand with those refusing to take this any longer.

Take even four-and-a-half minutes to think about what those days looked like. Go back and look at the photographs of the hundreds and then thousands who took a stand. Hundreds of students dramatizing “hands up, don’t shoot!” on college campuses; demonstrations and die-ins all across the country; major roads, freeways, bridges, and public transportation shut down; people from all over the world traveling to Ferguson; a requiem, “Which Side Are You On,” stopping the performance of the St. Louis symphony. The St. Louis Rams football team under stadium lights with their hands up. Beautiful works of art – paintings, songs and poetry expressed the pain and rage. Even the Christmas holiday season was heralded by waves of protests often overshadowing shopping at shrines to capitalism like the Mall of America and Fifth Ave. as the police who killed Eric Garner on July 17 of the same year also went unindicted by a New York City grand jury.

Without the defiance in Ferguson, very few would know the name Mike Brown. It is also very likely that very few people would know the names of many others – all those who when taken together repeatedly paint a picture that shows that this wasn’t an isolated incident in Missouri. In reality, every town had a Mike Brown and often more than one: Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, Rekia Boyd, Ayana-Stanley Jones, Tony Robinson, Walter Scott, Freddie Gray, and many, many more. The names and faces of those killed, the sorrow of friends and families, was staggering when the enormity of the crimes being committed by the armed enforcers of the state was exposed to the light of day.

From the very beginning, the powers-that-be – from the local authorities on up to Obama – were terrified of the defiance in Ferguson. The rulers of this white supremacist-capitalist system attacked this struggle physically and through the media. These same rulers – these people who rain violence down all over the world and in the ghettos and barrios to defend their system – these very same people told the people to be non-violent and to walk around in circles in the face of armed assault, and then attacked anyone who upheld the right of people to NOT lay down in the face of this. But the people stood up – strong and fierce and in doing so brought many people into the struggle on their side. **The heart and courage to stand up in the face of tear gas, tanks, rubber bullets, and live machine guns, curfews... in the face of the National Guard... in the face of 100s of arrests... in the face of political firemen urging the people to be calm while the police murder people over and over – this was new and inspiring.**

The authorities stalled for months, taking the case of Darren Wilson’s murder of Mike Brown to a grand jury, hoping people’s determination and attention would wane. Instead, the protesters persevered, often in creative ways to take the struggle to sporting events, insisting all of society confront this injustice. People from all over the country joined with them. After all this, when it was so clear that Mike Brown had been murdered by a cop

in broad daylight in front of many witnesses – when the grand jury refused to issue an indictment of Darren Wilson for ANY crime – it was too much and Ferguson erupted for a second time, and this time a much, much bigger section of society went into upheaval.

This was followed by another major assault on the whole struggle in May of this year, this time by the Department of Justice (DOJ) report on Ferguson. Rather than have a trial to determine what happened, the Department of IN-Justice backed the local district attorney and declared that those who said Mike Brown did NOT have his hands up were telling the truth, and that the other witnesses who said that Mike DID have his hands up were lying (this included not only people from Ferguson, but also two white construction workers who were captured on video witnessing the murder AS IT TOOK PLACE).

As many eyewitnesses did in fact make clear, Mike Brown DID HAVE HIS HANDS UP, AND “HANDS UP! DON’T SHOOT!” IS INDEED ONE VERY FITTING AND POWERFUL SLOGAN AND SYMBOL.

A really chilling (and worse) verdict issued by the DOJ report is concentrated in this one sentence: “There is no evidence upon which prosecutors can rely to disprove Wilson’s stated subjective belief that he feared for his safety.”

Not only was this a callous upholding of Mike Brown’s murder, this was the Black U.S. attorney general telling police EVERYWHERE *how they could get away with cold-blooded murder, especially of Black people, even if you’re found to be in a racist police department.* Just say you subjectively believe that you feared for your safety. Your belief could be completely irrational, and you can still kill with impunity. You can be a racist mf’er who thinks that all Black people by definition are a threat to your safety, and you can kill with impunity, *and the Justice Department will clear you.*

Everything we have said above – the real role of the struggle and why it brought out so many people and set off a whole new stage of things, how the IN-Justice Department report was a lie, and so on – all this is true. And those who are trying to erase this or turn it into something different are full of it.

It is important that on August 9, the anniversary of the murder of Michael Brown, people stand firmly and publicly manifest that the verdict rendered by the people, that those who took to the streets of Ferguson in righteous and defiant rebellion and protest night after night, was true – Mike Brown did not have to die. It was right for the people of Ferguson to rebel and people everywhere are proud of them for rising up. On August 9 if you can come to Ferguson and join the events of the anniversary of Mike Brown’s murder, we urge you to do so. But wherever you are, join with others to say we stand with the defiant ones in Ferguson – they were right. The DOJ was wrong – Mike Brown should not have been murdered by the police. HANDS UP! DON’T SHOOT! Fuck the DOJ!

The struggle in Ferguson opened a crack in the coffin where America has buried alive whole sections of Black and Latino youths and the struggle over the last year has widened the crack further.

WE WILL NOT GO BACK. All the forms of attack deployed against this struggle as it mushroomed from Ferguson to Baltimore – all the forms of attack from tanks and bullets, slanders and lies to trying to discredit it, massive arrests and dragnets, crumbs and sugar-coated bullets to try and derail and channel/force/co-opt the struggle back into safe outlets that don’t continue the fight to stop the police murders and terror – all this must be opposed, and we have to come back even stronger. This is what we intend to do October 22-24 in Rise Up October. We cannot and will not allow this to be “sealed” back up or the oxygen will go out of our collective lungs. No, we will reach out even wider and bring many, many more into the streets and change the face of this whole country.

How many more lives will be ground up? The murdering police are still in the streets and this must be stopped now. There is no middle ground in this struggle. At Ferguson 2015, this stand must be very clear and infuse everything:

**MICHAEL BROWN WAS MURDERED – NEVER FORGIVE! NEVER FORGET!
HANDS UP! DON’T SHOOT!**

And this in turn must be part of compelling ALL of society to rise to *this* challenge:
STOP POLICE TERROR: WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON?