

Black Lives Still Matter: Amir Locke protest



PHOTO | JACOB 'COBY' ALOI, ORACLE

Protesters gathered in Government Square on February 5 to protest the killing of Amir Locke. According to other News outlets, over 1,000 people were in attendance at the protest.

Protesters took to the streets on a cold February Saturday, to demand justice for yet another Black man killed by the Minneapolis Police Department; Amir Locke was killed during a no-knock warrant, a tactic by law enforcement that the Minneapolis Mayor's re-election campaign said he had banned in his first term.

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OVER ONE-THOUSAND protesters took to the streets yet again to rally against police violence on Saturday, February 5. Minneapolis Police fatally shot 22-year old

Black man Amir Locke 3 times, after serving a no-knock warrant around 7 a.m. on February 2. Police had been in the apartment for 9 seconds when an officer now identified by MPD as Mark Hanneman shot and killed Locke, who was sleeping on the couch and had a handgun. Locke was sleeping at a friend's apartment, and not named in the warrant or connected to the investigation.

Protesters rallied in front of the Hennepin County Government Center and heard from activists as well as the family of Locke. A cool 20 degrees in windy downtown didn't seem to dissuade turnout, in a city all too familiar with protests because of police brutality against Black folks, Philando Castile, Daunte Wright and George Floyd. The killing comes while the Federal trial against three officers involved in Floyd's death is underway across the Mississippi in Saint Paul.

"It was cold out and it was a Saturday afternoon so I assumed people had other things going on. I was relieved to see that people showed up for Amir Locke but also disappointed to know that it took another murder

for some people to find this issue worth their time and attention," Sophomore Kinzie McDowell said.

Newly re-elected Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey had touted his accomplishments on police reform in the aftermath of George Floyd's killing, including a now-deleted section on his campaign website that advertised the mayor's first-term accomplishments, including "banning the use of no-knock warrants in Minneapolis."

As it turns out, the mayor did not do that; he had banned police from unannounced entry, which MPD complied with as seen in the body camera footage, they shouted "Police, search warrant" before crossing the threshold of the apartment. Groups at the rally distributed signs that read "Frey Lied, Amir Died," and called for both Frey and new interim Minneapolis Police Chief Amiela Huffman's resignations.

The Saint Paul Police Department originally obtained the warrant for the apartment as part of an investigation into Locke's cousin, who was not present and is facing two counts of second-degree murder. The warrant SPPD

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AMIR LOCKE (continued from front)

obtained was not a no-knock warrant, and asked MPD to execute the warrant on their behalf as it was outside of Saint Paul. MPD then petitioned a judge to execute the warrant as a no-knock, according to the Star Tribune.

In a case that continues to live in the shadow of the George Floyd killing, the judge who granted that no-knock petition was Judge Peter Cahill, who oversaw the Derek Chauvin trial. Activists have since called for his resignation as well, arguing that the entire criminal justice system should be accountable when civilians are killed by police.

Despite the connotation that has been associated with protests for Black lives, the march and rallies remained peaceful, without looting or police-aggravation.

"I prepared for the worst, but stayed calm throughout the day. While there I felt safe, but also saddened and angry," said sophomore Jennifer Martinez Badillo who was also there.

The rally ended at the Minneapolis Police Department First Precinct after protesters marched down and closed S Third Ave and N Forth Street.

Locke's death has created some interesting bipartisan outrage. The handgun he

had was legally obtained and he had a conceal and carry permit. In the body camera footage, Locke can be clearly seen with his index finger extended along the barrel of the gun, not on the trigger, indicating he wasn't intending to shoot, a gun safety practice some call "trigger control." The Minnesota Gun Owners Caucus, a fairly conservative caucus, called for a ban on no-knock warrants, "Mr. Locke did what many of us might do in the same confusing circumstances, he reached for a legal means of self-defense while he sought to understand what was happening" their statement read, adding "Black men, like all citizens, have a right to keep and bear arms."

As of this reporting, no real action has been taken from city, state or Federal lawmakers. Mayor Frey instituted a new no-knock warrant moratorium after Locke's death, but after his false advertising this during his re-election campaign, lawyers and activists pointed out that this moratorium provides exceptions and may execute a no-knock warrant if approved by a judge, signed off by the Chief of Police and there is "imminent harm to an individual or the public"; which is effectively what the policy always has been.

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said the Biden administration is pushing to pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act which they say will curtail the use of no-knock warrants, and that they are looking into further expanding the restrictions on Federal agents to act on no-knocks; which they restricted alongside chokeholds and carotid restraints in September through an Executive Order.



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PHOTOS | JACOB 'COBY' ALOI AND LYDIA MEIER, ORACLE

A compilation of photos from the February 5, 2022 protest that took place in outside the Hennepin County Government Center in Minneapolis, MN. The protest was for Amir Locke who was shot and killed by police during a no-knock warrant.

For all photos, visit <https://hamlineoracle.com/>