

ASSAULTS ON FREE SPEECH AND THE CITIES WE DIDN'T SEE

Last night I thread a series of tweets documenting law enforcement abuses including attacks on journalists in different cities across the country during protests against police brutality.

I collected more than a half dozen reports from Minneapolis alone of attacks on journalists from different news organizations. This number doesn't represent the entire number of journalists attacked in that one city.

Those attacked included:

Michael Anthony Adams, journalist, VICE
Tom Aviles, photojournalist, CBS affiliate
WCCO

Jennifer Brooks, columnist, Star Tribune
Julio-Cesar Chavez, cameraman, Reuters and
Rodney Seward, security advisor, Reuters
Carolyn Cole, photographer, Los Angeles
Times

Molly Hennessy-Fiske, journalist Los
Angeles Times

John Marschitz, sound engineer, CBS
(national)

Unidentified team member with Omar Jimenez,
CNN

Unidentified camera person (reported by CNN
but doesn't appear to be on their team)

Nina Svanberg, journalist, Express-Sweden

Linda Tirado, freelance photographer

Ali Velshi, correspondent, MSNBC (and his
team including Morgan Chesky and Richard
Lui)

It's not clear from Jennifer Brooks' tweets from May 28 that her identity was clear to the police vehicle indiscriminately spraying tear gas out of a window toward the crowd.

Linda Tirado lost the sight in her left eye

after being hit with a rubber bullet in the face.

I don't have any tweets from Louisville KY but I've read that there was at least one more incident yesterday involving a member of the press. If you have anything about this and other police attacks on media not listed here, please share in comments.

Los Angeles was at least as bad as Minneapolis in terms of attacks on journalists.

These aren't random accidents. This is a clear pattern of behavior.

Law enforcement across the country is attacking the exercise of the First Amendment.

They aren't doing this relying on qualified immunity; their attacks on members of the press are violations of the Constitution where the identity of the media is clear, where law enforcement has made zero effort to validate the identity of the media persons they attacked.

Law enforcement are doing this with qualified *impunity* – assumed but not granted by voters.

Ignoring the rule of law which is the foundation of law enforcement's existence means law enforcement has de-legitimized itself.

They are criminal gangs when they break the law and fail to protect and serve the public's interest by attacking media which informs the public.

It's absolutely essential that elected officials and the public demand accountability from law enforcement for their attacks on media during protests this week, before law enforcement becomes even more unaccountable for a broader range of failures to protect and serve the public

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While Twitter has been awash with reports of police abusing protesters and the press – which interestingly failed to stop many white

instigators engaging in property damage across the country – there were three cities I noted which did not devolve into riots while observing protests of police brutality.

They were Santa Cruz, California and Flint, Michigan.

I'll let these tweets speak for themselves.

Powerful image of the protest in Santa Cruz this morning. Mayor Justin Cummings and Police Chief Andrew Mills took a knee in solidarity. (□: Shmuel Thaler.)
pic.twitter.com/EQ36VNIKtC

– Heather Knight (@hknightstf) May 30, 2020

Law enforcement's decisions about how to engage with demonstrators can make all the difference.

Flint, Michigan→ The County Sheriff joined a group of largely Black protesters in their march for justice.
#GeorgeFloydProtests
pic.twitter.com/IhJcX0bcFg

– Kristen Clarke (@KristenClarkeJD) May 31, 2020

There weren't reports in my timeline of property damage and rioting in either of these cities last night.

There also weren't reports in these two cities of white agents provocateur escalating tensions by damaging property as there were in every city where police abused protesters.

It'd be nice to know if there is a more direct link between police brutality during protests and the appearance of white agitators.

This is an open thread.