

Castlemont High Walks Out to Protest Police Violence!



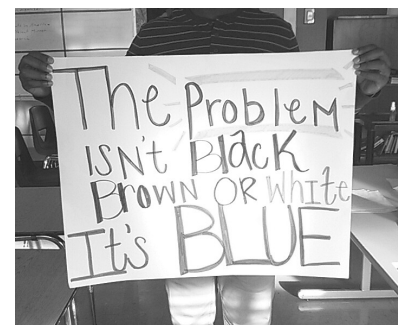
WHAT CAUSED IT?

On Tuesday November 15, 2015, students at Castlemont High School walked out to protest the ongoing police violence that their community experiences. The tipping point was the killing of a Richard Perkins, Jr., a Black man, at a sideshow on Saturday, November 14th. The police claim that they were trying to break up the sideshow when the man pointed a fake gun at them, but the man's family and other community members reject this story. They claim that the cops made an example out of Richard because they couldn't control the sideshow, and used the the fake gun excuse to justify this cold blooded murder.

Sideshowes have been a long time Oakland and Bay Area party tradition, but the city and the police have started to crack down on them in order to market the city to a richer, whiter demographic.

Many of the students live in neighborhood where the sideshow occurred, and they see sideshows as part of their local culture. The night of the murder, they heard the police sirens, heard the gunshots, and later heard about the killing of Richard. They were enraged about Richard's murder, and many of them made the chilling connection of how Richard could have easily been one of their family members.

Instead of moving on from this tragedy, a core group of Black students got together the next day and decided to organize a protest through the Castlemont Black Student Union in order to tell the police and the city that this violence has to stop, and that it is time for a change. The students are inspired by the recent walkout against violent, anti-black threats at Berkeley High, and the protests in Minneapolis against the police killing of Jamar Clark. They see their struggle as part of the broader struggle for Black lives and against police violence.



This pamphlet is produced by **Advance the Struggle**

We are a communist collective operating in the Bay Area. We seek to organize with workers, students, and community members to challenge capitalist domination of our workplaces, schools, neighborhoods, and our everyday lives. For more info, please see our blog.

www.advancethestruggle.ml

If you are interested in more information about further organizing, please email bay.strikes@gmail.com

WHAT WENT DOWN?

On Monday, they used their advisory period and their lunch to make posters and spread the message to other students via word of mouth and social media that they would be holding a protest at 12:45pm the following Tuesday. They were nervous but they knew that they had to do something.

The day of the protest, they gathered everyone at school who was wearing all black, had posters, or wanted to get involved, and they led a silent walkout at 12:55pm from the school to 90th and Bancroft, the site of the murder. In total, there were about 150-200 students of all different races that walked out along with a few teachers, coaches, and academic advisors.

When they reached 90th and Bancroft, they were joined by community members for a rally and speak out against police violence. It was really a rough moment for their community – they were trying to juggle moments of sadness and rage. They held signs up and had the crowd screaming and chanting slogans against police violence, for Black lives, and all lives, so that the media and passersby knew what the rally was about. At about 2:30pm the students collectively agreed to march back to their school.



This rally was not the end point for these students, but the beginning. Many of the students involved were energized by the power they demonstrated by walking out, and they have channeled this energy into more organizing.

On Monday, November 23rd, Castlemont students along with the family of Richard Perkins, Jr. held a vigil for Richard where they collected coats for the homeless in their community, and then they occupied the intersection of 90th and Bancroft, effectively stopping traffic for about 2 hours.

Through this experience, the students at Castlemont have begun to develop their own form of organization that can address the issues that directly affect their community. They continue to meet up regularly, are linking up with other students in the Bay Area, and started the #knights4liberation hashtag to keep other students and community members informed on what their next steps are. As one student shouted at a rally, "They will not stop until they get what they want."



WHAT CAN WE LEARN?

There is a student movement that is spreading across the U.S. and we are now seeing it here in the Bay Area. This forces us to think about how we can use the energy created to deepen and spread these struggles to reach broader layers of the Bay Area working class. This is the only way we can begin to win real victories against police violence and capitalist attacks. The form of student organization that developed at Castlemont is a small example of how this can happen, and it should be replicated at schools throughout the Bay Area.

What if there was a response like this by students every time OPD killed someone, or OUSD administrators tried to shut down their schools? What if students at different schools began to coordinate with each other to lead a mass walkout to address the issue of police killings and racist violence? What if these students linked up with bus drivers and other workers and community members to shut the city down?

These are the tasks at hand and what this small experience has shown is possible.