

#1586 Cop City is the Backlash to the Backlash Against Police Brutality and Murder, the Atlanta Community is Fighting Back and Creating a Blueprint for Change in the Process

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: [00:00:00] Welcome to this episode of the award-winning *Best of the Left* podcast, in which we shall take a look at the Stop Cop City movement in Atlanta, which is the current "tip of the spear" of the police accountability movement. But the instinct of elected officials to lean into building more and bigger policing facilities is likely to spread as part of the backlash to the backlash against police violence. So be on the lookout for similar plans in your neck of the woods.

Sources today include *Rattling the Bars*, *On the Nose*, *The Police Accountability Report*, *Democracy Now!*, *Revolutions Per Minute*, and activist Keyanna Jones, with additional members-only clips from Keyanna Jones and *Revolutions Per Minute*.

Cop City, RICO, and corporate fascism w/ Taya Graham & Stephen Janis - Rattling the Bars - Air Date 9-18-23

MANSA MUSA - HOST, RATTLING THE BARS: Conrad George Jackson stated in one of his writings that the criminal injustice system itself is the enemy of any type of resistance to fascism. Throughout this country's history, we see the use of the criminal injustice system to suppress any type of resistance [00:01:00] to fascism. J. Edgar Hoover stated that the goal of the counterintelligence program COINTELPRO was to prevent the rise of a Black Messiah, who would be capable of organizing Black people and defying fascism.

Given our history, it's no surprise that in 2023, we're talking about an attempt to build a military-style complex for training police in Atlanta, also known as Cop City. Cop City itself will be a monument to our criminal injustice system. The fastest response to people protesting Cop City shows what this project is all

about. As we speak, the state of Georgia is pursuing RICO charges for over 60 Cop City protestors. Before the crackdown on Cop City protestors, the LA Police Department criminal conspiracy section used agent provocateurs to set up and kill members of the Black Panther Party. The most noted agent provocateur was Louis Tackwood.

[00:02:00] Criminalizing civil disobedience was a goal of the LA criminal conspiracy section and that's only one of the countless examples of state fascist crackdown on dissent. The Chicago Seven, The Panther 21, anti-war protestors in the '60s, civil rights protestors, and now the Stop Cop City Movement.

Before we go into unpacking Cop City, let's give context to where we believe that this response is coming from. We had Rodney King. We had Freddie Gray. We had George Floyd. We had multiple examples of people being killed by the police. As a result of that, we had an outcry, a national outcry, a worldwide outcry against police brutality, and the tactics being used. And the cry came, on a lot of levels, with police reform. I've got issues with reforming the police but that's what they came up [00:03:00] with. We need to do something with divesting the police.

And as a result of that, we see now the fascist response is to say okay, we hear you. So, we're going to do something and we're going to meet your demands by creating a training mechanism for the police. And the training mechanism we're going to create, we're going to create this state-of-the-art facility. We're going to create this training facility that's going to be so magnificent that when the police come out, they're going to be like Robocop. They're going to be programmed to see the kitten in the tree and take it down. They'll be programmed to see a little kid going across the street with a bicycle and stop the car. They'd be programmed such that they'll be so sanitized that when people call for the police, they're going to expect the police to come and do what they're delegated to do. That's a myth.

The Struggle to Stop Cop City - On the Nose - Air Date 6-22-23

CS: I'm wondering if you could back up a little bit and talk about what, exactly, was being [00:04:00] proposed in 2021, or the social context in which it was being developed.

KJ: So this project was conceived without one shred of input from the public that it affects. There were unprecedented numbers of people who showed up in

the streets of Atlanta during 2020, when we had a lot of outrage about different social justice issues that were affecting us, many of those being the murder of black men by police. What we saw in 2020—not only in Atlanta, but all across this country—was something that had not been seen before, with people showing up and saying, “Hey, we are not going to allow this to happen. We are no longer going to just bow down to a police state where you continue to murder us with impunity.” As a response to that, there are some people in the city of Atlanta, and particularly in [00:05:00] the more affluent, majority-white neighborhood of Buckhead, who said, “Hey, y’all gotta get those Negroes under control down there. They can’t be out in the streets of Buckhead, talking about ‘No justice, no peace.’ We can’t have this, and if this continues, if you don’t get a handle on that, then we’re going to secede from the city of Atlanta and take this 40% of your tax base.”

The city of Atlanta did not see where they could possibly sustain a hit like that, so Councilwoman Joyce Sheperd, in collusion with the Atlanta Police Foundation and whomever else that she spoke to—but certainly not residents of the city of Atlanta—introduced the proposal for Cop City. The mayor at the time was Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms and the current mayor, Andre Dickens, was a member of the council. And at that time, I was living in Decatur, probably about 15 minutes away from the proposed location of Cop City and in an area, by the [00:06:00] way, that has been neglected by the city of Atlanta since I was a little girl [and I’m 43 years old]. The city of Atlanta has never cared about that part of Atlanta because it is actually unincorporated, DeKalb County. So the city of Atlanta put \$0 into any type of infrastructure in that area, any type of resources for the community, anything to beautify the community, they have never done in that area until they saw an opportunity to get in bed with the APF and all their corporate donors, to take their kickbacks, to take the status that it affords them with their associations: they decided to take that in exchange for further disenfranchising that Black community in that area.

Then, when you think about Cop City in the larger context of what it is and what it represents, it makes total sense that a facility that will be for militarized training of police to further repress Black people would be in a Black neighborhood where [00:07:00] there are schools, where Black children have to hear gunfire constantly. And at the time, I was like, “This is crazy. I don’t think that’s really going to happen.” I saw the way the community showed up, I thought “There’s no way that this is gonna go through because the public has spoken.” But that Atlanta city council at that time showed us, right then, who they were and who they were there to serve by voting to pass that legislation. And what I will say is that every council member who was a member of council at the time, who voted in favor, is no longer a council person. So I hope that this current council recognizes that: we saw what you did. But back to the more

focused point of where this came from: What Cop City is, is really their answer to that unprecedented swell of public participation and peaceful protesting and marches and rallies. They saw the community speak [00:08:00] up and use their voices like they never had before, and they decided that Cop City was going to be the way to shut us down.

JDR: One thing I think that's really important about what the Reverend just said, is that there's this idea nationally—and I think also in Atlanta, particularly in areas of Atlanta, like Buckhead, you know, majority white areas of the city that also get the most benefit from the city social services—that after 2020, or even after 2014, let's say, police are constrained, they're being forced to be too accountable, and the tables have turned, right? People think we've gone too far in the direction of police accountability, and we need to scale back. That is a relatively common perspective among some parts of this city. But I think the Cop City story is really evidence that the opposite is actually true. There is less accountability now than ever. We used to live in a time where we had more accountable media, we [00:09:00] had better local news, we had more ability to do public comment. And we now live in an era where the city council is willing to say “Hey, we're gonna put 10s and 10s of millions of dollars into this structure that we know very well, the people of the city are not comfortable with, because we saw them in the streets, we saw the march, we're not going to ask your input,” and they thought they weren't gonna pay a political price for it. So I just say that to say when people see the Cop City conversation, I think it's important to remember that this is in the context of the entire population across the country being gaslit into being told, “Actually, we've gone too far in the direction of worrying about police harm and now we have to scale back,” because that's so clearly not what's happening.

Is America becoming Cop City - The Police Accountability Report - Air Date 4-10-23

Taya Graham: Now, before we delve into some of the more troubling details of how the plans for Cop City unfolded, it's important to note that the relationship between residents and the police department were already tense. Let's listen to Kamau Franklin from Community Movement Builders to explain the history a little bit.

KAMAU FRANKLIN: So the relationship is not a great [00:10:00] relationship because, I mean, for various reasons, Atlanta has a history, even though it has probably a majority black police force of also using stop and frisk and police violence and violence against the community. And so the relationship is fraught about now. Three years ago, Rashard Brooks, less than a mile from

here, was killed at a Wendy's, which was part of the 2020 uprisings in which people here in Atlanta, as well as all across the country, took to the streets. And over 90%, I think it's approximately 90% of the arrest in Fulton County, which is the county that Atlanta is mostly situated in. Over 90% of those arrests are of black people in Atlanta, even though Atlanta no longer makes up the majority of black residents in the city itself.

Taya Graham: So also, Stephen, there was something we noticed, which was along with the fraught relations between police and the community, the mainstream media was advancing a narrative that was quite at odds with what we saw on the ground, but there was also a group that was trying to counter that narrative. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Stephen Janis: Yeah. Well, [00:11:00] the Atlanta Press Collective, which is really just, one, I think the most beautiful things in terms of how journalism, despite the fact that the mainstream media has all the funding, the corporate advertising, that there are citizens who just say, "No, we're going to tell this story in a different way." And let's remember that narratives are important. Narratives are extremely important to policing because policing is, in some ways, a function of governmental narrative saying that there are failed communities and there are successful communities. And that's why the people we spoke to, some of the on-the-ground journalists, were working, I mean, literally just working for the passion of telling the community's stories so important because it shapes a narrative in a way that I think makes other things possible. It's a narrative that's posited against the idea of police narrative, which is, here's a community that doesn't deserve agency, here's a community that doesn't deserve amenities. The only people that deserve to have power are the people who already have it. So I think this was very, for me, inspiring.

Taya Graham: Yeah. Now there ... Oh, should we run that clip from the Atlanta ...

Stephen Janis: Yeah.

Taya Graham: ... Community Press Collective?

Stephen Janis: Yeah.

Taya Graham: Let's give them a moment to share their thoughts.

[00:12:00]

Speaker 4: How they're interpreting these domestic terrorism charges.

Clark: So there are a few things about the mainstream media coverage. One, our paper of record, the AJC is owned by Cox Media. Cox Media is owned by Cox Enterprises, the chair of Cox Enterprises, Alan, or-

Taya Graham: Now, that was Clark from the Atlanta Community Press Collective. Stephen ...

Stephen Janis: Yeah.

Taya Graham: ... I know you were impressed with that independent reporter.

Stephen Janis: Oh, yeah, absolutely. Well ... But he makes a great point that the Atlanta Journal-Constitution is owned by the Cox family, which the Cox family is also part of the funders of the Atlanta Police Foundation, which is funding Cop City. So there you have the most powerful media institution in Atlanta, which also happens to be involved in Cop City.

Taya Graham: Yeah.

Stephen Janis: So how can you expect objective coverage of this story from an institution that is intimately involved in its creation?

Taya Graham: Oh, absolutely.

Stephen Janis: It's, I think, a little disturbing, to say the least, but it's also a very normal fact of life in many US cities, [00:13:00] where the mainstream media is intertwined with the institutions that people are trying to hold accountable. So I was really impressed with his breadth and scope of knowledge and his reporting.

Taya Graham: And I also noted something, that particular newspaper, what was it? The Atlanta Constitutional Journal. Is that-

Stephen Janis: Atlanta Journal-Constitution, yes.

Taya Graham: Atlanta Journal-Constitution. I had noticed when I was doing a little research on it, that same day, they had announced their first ever black editor.

Stephen Janis: Yeah.

Taya Graham: This is isn Atlanta, which has been a majority black city.

Stephen Janis: True.

Taya Graham: Home of civil rights, and they literally just got their first black person as an editor. Okay.

Stephen Janis: Yeah.

Taya Graham: Not a great sign. Anyway, that is ... Let me take my reporter hat off for that one.

Stephen Janis: Yeah.

Taya Graham: Now, there was a key private group funding Cop City with dark money called the Atlanta Police Foundation. It is a nonprofit organization which comprised of a board of economic elites that represent corporate America, to say the least. Executives from Fortune 500 companies like Delta Airlines, [00:14:00] Coca-Cola, Chick-fil-A, Waffle House, Cox Enterprises, Home Depot, Merrill Lynch, Equifax, Delta Airlines, I could go on and on. It's literally a who's who of corporate Atlanta, who are oddly committed to just funding police privately, but they also have a bit of an issue with transparency, I've noticed.

And Stephen, what I've also found interesting is that this private police foundation is not only funding Cop City, but it also sponsors a citywide surveillance system, which we learned is named after a developer. So let's listen to one of the activists, Micah Herskind, describe what they are fighting against.

MICAH HERSKIND: They were founded in the early two thousands, so they've been around for a couple decades now. And really, yeah, they're supported by a bunch of different corporations, many Atlanta-based corporations, and, really, they, in a lot of ways, act as a shadow government in Atlanta. They have an immense amount of power and authority. I think politicians and people who are [00:15:00] trying to see collected office know that, in many cases, if you want a career in politics in Atlanta, you're going to have to go through the Atlanta Police Foundation because they just have a lot of money and wield a lot of influence. They give a lot of funding to the cops. They channel this private money that is, of course, tax deferred into policing. They operate the city's Operation Shield network, which is this massive network of surveillance cameras that includes both city cameras and then also everyday

people can hook up their security cameras into this feed. And so making Atlanta one of the most surveilled city in the country.

Speaker 7: [inaudible] .

MICAH HERSKIND: Yeah. So through Operation Shield, which is this surveillance network, all of the footage from the city security cameras, individuals, security cameras that people can link up to the system is run through what is called the Loudermilk Video Integration Center, of course, named after one of these rich Atlanta families developer companies, which even [00:16:00] just right there shows the connections of who is behind surveillance and policing in the city.

Taya Graham: So Stephen, I know you've done reporting on surveillance systems before and here and in Baltimore, but a private surveillance system named after a developer.

Stephen Janis: Yeah.

Taya Graham: How do you explain that?

Stephen Janis: Well, I found that very interesting because if you look at Atlanta, it's like a concrete testament to extreme wealth. And so it makes sense, the developer would also have the power to surveil privately the citizens of the city. And I think you can see parallels in cities like Baltimore, where we have done primarily two things, giving tax breaks to developers and spent billions of dollars on policing. And those two things intersect in cities like Atlanta and cities like Baltimore because development is one of the main economic engines. So for him to have actual control over the surveillance system, it's also almost Gotham-esque in a sense.

Taya Graham: Oh, no.

Stephen Janis: Like we're in Gotham City now.

Taya Graham: Very much so.

Stephen Janis: Right, because, literally, he owns the real estate and he pays to surveil the real estate. [00:17:00] So it gives you ... It's a little weird and a little disturbing, to say the least.

Taya Graham: Yeah. I mean, when I was there and I learned about all the different CEOs and executives and corporate elites, it really sounded very dystopian.

Stephen Janis: Yeah.

Taya Graham: I mean, it's like one of those futures you can imagine where we don't have countries anymore, we're owned by corporations, and the corporations control every aspect of the society.

Stephen Janis: Yeah.

Taya Graham: It's really scary.

Stephen Janis: We're going to take the metaphor a little ... You have this beautiful gleaming city, but underneath it is this private dystopian surveillance system that affects not the people who live in the \$700,000 condos, but the people who live on the edge of what will be Cop City. They're the ones being surveilled, and the people controlling it are the people that own the building. So very illustrative of some of the problems with law enforcement.

The Struggle to Stop Cop City Part 2 - On the Nose - Air Date 6-22-23

CS: I'm also wondering if you could say a little more about the land itself and what we're talking about when we talk about a struggle over this forest. What exactly is being contested? What does this land mean ecologically, socially? What has it meant [00:18:00] historically?

KJ: So this land, originally Muscogee Creek, indigenous peoples' land, of course. Then, after they ran the Muskogee people out and sent them on the Trail of Tears, this land was a plantation. After it was a plantation, it became a prison farm. After that, it became a training facility for Atlanta police. All I hear, in all of that, is violence against black bodies. It's 381 acres of forest land, one of the largest urban forests in the southeastern United States, the largest urban forest in the state of Georgia. It is known as one of the lungs of Atlanta; literally, we need it to breathe, because right now, when there is an air quality alert here in Georgia, and we're at code orange, because we're actually getting some of that residue from those wildfires up north: think about what it means [00:19:00] if we did not have 381 acres of forest land to absorb some of that. You have the South River that runs through there, so that is a part of the South River

watershed, which is vitally important. The South River is the main headwater of the Altamaha river, goes all the way down to South Georgia, toward Darien and even farther down. The South River watershed is vital to this community, as is Intrenchment Creek, which is also encompassed there. And the South River, known by indigenous people as the Weelaunee, is the second most polluted river in the United States. So remember: Black area severely neglected by the city of Atlanta for decades, most of the pollution goes there. And this is where I was born and raised, this is where I grew up. This is where I moved back to when I moved back to Georgia. This is where I'm raising my children. So when you ask about this land, what it [00:20:00] means and how important it is: it is everything to us.

JDR: The only thing I want to point out here, is that this is yet another example of cities making decisions that are explicitly terrible in the long term, for short term benefit to whomever they're trying to please at that moment. And so, that's not new; I mean, every politician has been doing it since the beginning of time. But I think that being really explicit about this, right? I mean, when you see a line down the block of people saying "Please, don't do this," and minutes later, they vote overwhelmingly to do it.

CS: Yeah, it seems like there's at least two watershed moments where the myth of representative democracy has been revealed as a myth: the first city council vote and then this most recent one, and I'm sure there are a number of others along the way. But I wanted to come back to the public-private partnerships that Micah you had mentioned several times.

MH: The way that I think about all of these [00:21:00] partnerships are: these are all a formation through which capital is organizing itself, to advocate in and take control of Atlanta. And so you have Central Atlanta Progress, which is sort of like the downtown boostery business group; you have the Atlanta Committee for Progress, whose corporate membership mirrors so much of the Atlanta Police Foundation; there's Delta, UPS, Home Depot, Waffle House, Wells Fargo, you know, basically, so many of the different major Atlanta-based corporations are organizing themselves in their power and their money through all of these different vehicles. And what the result ends up being, in all of these cases, is that more money gets channeled into policing, fewer dollars go into the government. Atlanta has been home to so much gentrification and rapid development, and one of the ways that that's happened is through all of these massive subsidies, whether on the front end or on the back end. Through the ways that these developments are financed, what you have is [00:22:00] less and less money going into the public coffers, and the money that does go in comes out to support policing—a third of our budget goes to policing. What isn't being publicly spent on policing is being privately subsidized by the

Atlanta Police Foundation. So, to take one example: The Atlanta Police Foundation run the network of surveillance cameras in Atlanta called Operation Shield. It's a feed that allows any person with a Ring camera or any other personal security camera to incorporate their feed into that stream. And so all of this combined towards. You have a city that essentially works in total service to corporations by doling out a lot of public dollars in the form of subsidies, and then using the public money that they do collect as essentially a security force for capital.

KJ: Honestly, these public-private partnerships should be illegal. Because at the end of the day, what this allows for is for these [00:23:00] foundations to write a check that the city of Atlanta has to cash—it makes no sense. Basically, these corporations will take out a loan, and the people of Atlanta are going to have to pay it back because it will be our money that will go into what the council agrees to pay in that public-private partnership. What it allows for is, like Micah said, for Chick-fil-A, Waffle House, Delta, Home Depot, Norfolk Southern, Truist Bank, Wells Fargo, Bank of America, JP Morgan Chase, Cox Enterprises, to run the city of Atlanta and have police paid to protect their interests.

JDR: And it also allows state legislatures to continue to siphon money out of municipalities. It basically means government doesn't have to fund government, right? And that is an illusion that is being perpetuated by a significant portion of our political class that is false. Actually, to have a strong, sustainable, healthy government, you have to be able to [00:24:00] pay for that. And so what is happening is that we are seeing this cycle of the gospel of low taxes and disinvestment being hidden by these private interests that come in and do what they do to make things look better than they really are. But this, in some ways, is what we saw in Ferguson, right? Like we are seeing revenue-making efforts being put on the backs of the people struggling the most. And we are seeing people on the state level and the federal level coast to reelection and coast to office by saying we're gonna make it even harder for localities to function.

MH: I think that's such an important point. Because the other thing with these public-private partnerships is that one of their rhetorical strategies is that things are often framed as the direction the money is flowing, it's from the private to the public. So with Cop City, it's "Okay, this is going to be \$60 million of private donations and \$30 million from the city." With the Olympics in 1996 in Atlanta, it was going to be "You know, for some [00:25:00] cities, the Olympics have made them go bankrupt, because it's publicly funded. But the way we're going to do here is it's going to be privately funded, and that's going to allow it to actually be worth it for Atlanta." And still, you ended up having a massive investment of both land and resources being transferred from public to private, of land and public dollars during the Olympics. Same thing that's happening

right now. Whereas, you know, in the beginning, this idea of public-private partnership of Cop City was \$60 million private \$30 million public. Now, the Atlanta Police Foundation has not been able to raise that full \$60 million, and what they are demanding from the city, which the city just passed, is \$67 million in funding. So the city's contribution went from \$30m to \$67m, and it will surely go up. And the so-called "private donations"—which again, are just another form of stolen public wealth, because that is profit that corporations have that are not going into public hands—that hasn't even been put up as promised.

A Political Prosecution 61 Cop City Opponents Hit with RICO Charges by Georgia's Republican AG - Democracy Now! - Air Date 9-6-23

AMY GOODMAN: We're beginning today's show in Atlanta, Georgia, where the state's Republican attorney general has announced a sweeping new RICO [00:26:00] indictment against 61 activists and others he accuses of being part of a, quote, "criminal enterprise" to stop Cop City, a massive \$90 million police training complex that's facing widespread opposition and ongoing protests. The charges were brought in Fulton County and approved by the same grand jury that indicted former President Donald Trump and 18 of his associates on RICO, or racketeering, charges brought by Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis, who is a Democrat.

At a news conference Tuesday, Georgia Attorney General Chris Carr and John Fowler, head of Georgia's Prosecution Division, laid out their allegations and why they brought the case in Fulton County.

ATTORNEY GENERAL CHRISTOPHER CARR: As alleged in the indictment, the defendants are members of Defend the Atlanta Forest, an anarchist, anti-police and anti-business extremist organization. We contend these 61 [00:27:00] defendants together have conspired to prevent the construction of the Atlanta Public Safety Training Center by conducting, coordinating and organizing acts of violence, intimidation and property destruction.

JOHN FOWLER: Why Fulton County and not DeKalb County? Georgia racketeering law allows that, and we availed ourselves of the Georgia racketeering law to do that. Anywhere that a predicate act or an overt act in

furtherance of a conspiracy occurred, in any county where that occurred, is where you can indict the case. And we chose Fulton County. ...

When you allege a conspiracy to commit racketeering, there's no requirement under Georgia law that they know each other. The whole purpose of the Georgia racketeering law is that they're all working in some way, shape or form towards the same goal, and they formed a conspiracy to do that. That doesn't necessarily mean that every person has to talk to every single person. All you have to do is commit one overt act in furtherance of the conspiracy with the others, and then you can be guilty of racketeering. So that's why, is because [00:28:00] it's a large case, and so if you want to tie everybody together and they're all trying to do the same thing, racketeering is the appropriate charge.

AMY GOODMAN: In addition to the 61 racketeering indictments, five people were also indicted on domestic terrorism and first-degree arson charges. Three people with the Atlanta Solidarity Fund were each indicted on 15 counts of money laundering for their work to provide bail money and legal aid for protesters. The indictment was issued on September 5th and filed August 29th. The indictment alleges the protests included violent anti-police sentiment, that's now one of the, quote, "core driving motives" of protest to stop Cop City.

For more, we go to Atlanta, where we're joined by Keyanna Jones, a Stop Cop City organizer for Community Movement Builders, and Devin Franklin, movement policy counsel at the Southern Center for Human Rights. He worked over a decade as a public defender in Atlanta. His group has issued a call for [00:29:00] lawyers to represent the 61 people now facing RICO charges.

We welcome you both to Democracy Now! These are late-breaking developments. Devin, let's begin with you. Can you explain what happened? Can you explain these RICO charges against 61 activists from the same Fulton County grand jury that approved the RICO charges against President Trump? But this was all led by the Republican attorney general. It almost looks like a response to what Fani Willis did with the grand jury against President Trump and others.

DEVIN FRANKLIN: Good morning.

Yes, it certainly is a response, but I would argue that it is a response to the larger movement that has been [inaudible] as it pertains to several matters of police violence and government prejudice. It's just a lot going on. And I think that the state has shown that they don't have a [00:30:00] meaningful way to respond to

what the people are showing that they want, and they are choosing to use the legal process in an essentially violent way to target protesters.

JUAN GONZALEZ: And could you talk about the indictment itself, some of the main aspects of it, Devin Franklin? And the number of people is extraordinary, that are charged.

DEVIN FRANKLIN: Yeah, it's really rare for this number of people to be included on an indictment. In my 12 years as a public defender in Fulton County, I never had a case that was this large or witnessed a case that was this large. I think that when we look at the number of people that were accused and we look at the allegations that are included in the indictment, what we see are a wide variety of activities that are lawful that are being deemed to be criminal, and that includes things such as passing out flyers — right? — a really clear [00:31:00] example of First Amendment — the exercise of First Amendment rights. We see that organizations that were bailing people out for protests or conducting business in otherwise lawful manners have been deemed to be part of some ominous infrastructure. And it's just not accurate. This is really clearly a political prosecution. And, yeah.

JUAN GONZALEZ: And how does it turn out that the same grand jury that indicted Trump and his associates was the grand jury on this particular case?

DEVIN FRANKLIN: It appears to be so, from the limited information that I've been given. And it could simply be a matter of timing. It could have been something that has — that was [inaudible] by DA Fani Willis and AG Chris Carr. There's no way to know for certain.

But what we do know is [00:32:00] that for some point in time — for a period of time, rather, the attorney general of the state of Georgia, the governor of the state of Georgia, Brian Kemp, have both expressed discontent with the success that has been gained by the Stop Cop City movement and the momentum that has been created in the streets among the people, and that they have chosen to use those things which they have at their access, at their disposal, to assist the attempt to criminalize otherwise lawful activity.

AMY GOODMAN: Devin Franklin, what's interesting is that the DeKalb County's top prosecutor, the DA, announced she is stepping away from every case involving Atlanta's Public Safety Training Center, Cop City. DeKalb County District Attorney Sherry Boston announced she is out. She will not support these charges going forward. Your response to this?

DEVIN FRANKLIN: I think it's telling. I think it's really telling, because the DeKalb County [00:33:00] prosecutor has, you know, a pretty good reputation in the legal community. And for her to take a look at the actions that the attorney general was seeking to go forward with in her county and for her to say, you know, "I don't want to be parts of it. I have concerns about the legitimacy of these charges. I have concerns about the intent of the charges that the prosecutor, Attorney General Chris Carr, is seeking," I think that it is kind of a unique way of saying the quiet part out loud, which is, "Something is not right. Something doesn't smell right with this entire situation, and I want no parts of it." And I think that will bear out as we get deeper into the discovery that is to follow the indictment.

AMY GOODMAN: And very quickly, before we go to Keyanna Jones, your own center, the Southern Center for Human Rights, has it been named in any way in this? You have [00:34:00] called for lawyers around the country to come help represent the protesters, but you, yourself, are a lawyer, and you're a former public defender.

DEVIN FRANKLIN: Correct, yeah, in no way that I am aware that we have been named in anything. We are, essentially, just trying to make sure that persons who are brought within the arms of the legal system have access to counsel. That's a constitutional right, and there is nothing unlawful about ensuring that people have fair, accurate, zealous representation when they're taking on a system such as what the state of Georgia is being at this point in time.

Stop Cop City with Atlanta DSA - Revolutions Per Minute - Air Date 8-23-23

LISA - HOST, REVOLUTIONS PER MINUTE: Yeah, it's a hard thing to be fighting against. And terrorist charge, RICO charges, like that's really terrifying stuff to be faced with. So yeah, we really appreciate people continuing to fight. And can you talk a little bit about how you actually are fighting back against this facility, what kind of tactics, how are you organizing to stop [00:35:00] this?

GABRIEL SANCHEZ: Yeah, so there's definitely been a diversity of tactics throughout the coalition. And so initially in 2021, it was a lot of canvassing and bringing people together to voice their concerns. We had town halls and stuff and all that. And we had 17 hours of public comments in 2021, and the vast majority of those were against the facility.

And then we did that again earlier this summer when they had to approve the funding. We had over 15 hours of public comment, and out of those, only four spoke for it and the rest were all against, 10 minutes for it and the rest against, so it was insane. And they still voted for it.

So, earlier this year there was starting to have some conversations around a potential referendum. So, some people in DSA and a few others had looked at the law books and noticed that there was a very old law in Atlanta, City of Atlanta, it was made in the late 1800s about referendums. Now, the reason that we hadn't thought of a referendum before is because you can't do referendums in Georgia [00:36:00] through petitioning; you can only do it through the state legislature for the state of Georgia. So there's not a lot of an ability for organizing in Georgia to do ballot initiatives like there are in other states. However, what we didn't realize is that municipalities are still allowed to do ballot initiatives, which we weren't aware of until recently.

And so there's only been one other case that we're aware of in the state of Georgia where a local county did a referendum. And so, we use that blueprint -- it's a county called Camden County, it's in rural Georgia. And they succeeded in their referendum effort and they were challenged by the county and the courts and the Georgia Supreme Court upheld the referendum.

And so, based off of that legal precedent, we decided to move forward with the referendum in the city of Atlanta. But of course this is unprecedented. This has never been done before, which honestly surprises me. I'm surprised there hasn't been any effort, considering how old this law is. But I guess it's because Atlanta is such a huge city, [00:37:00] and we have to get 15 percent of registered voters to sign.

Now, there's a lot of stipulations that are added on to the law. So, it has to be people who are registered to vote in the last mayoral election. So, it can't be currently registered voters, it has to be people who voted, who are registered to vote in 2021, and since then have been registered to vote in the city of Atlanta, which definitely limits the pool.

We also originally had a stipulation that required that anyone collecting signatures had to sign the signatures as a witness and that witness had to be also a City of Atlanta resident which is also very, very stymieing because the City of Atlanta itself has a population of I believe, around 500,000, maybe less, but Metro Atlanta has a population of about 5 million. So, a lot of our organizing in Atlanta does include people in the Metro area who are in the city limits, and so it made it very difficult for [00:38:00] people to be able to get involved, including myself. I live two miles outside of the city limits, so I wasn't able to

witness signatures. But, so we had to pair people up to canvass, and it made it very difficult.

But fortunately, we were able to succeed in the court to get overturn that specific stipulation. So now anyone can help collect signatures, which is amazing.

But yeah, the whole effort around the referendum has been insane because, to be frank, on the onset we were talking about this, we didn't really think this would actually happen, because it's just how much of an undertaking it would be and how much power we would need to actually get it done.

So we didn't initially start the referendum, but we had started messaging around it, like posting on social media and putting on our website, and other people picked that up and then we found that there was other people who were interested in also doing so. And so we came together as a coalition to make this happen. And honestly, I never expected this [00:39:00] to get anywhere near this successful, to be frank.

So the fact that we've gotten almost 100,000 signatures now, and we need 58,000 verified signatures in order to get on the ballot, is insane, and has really shown that this is a moment in Atlanta that is going to be a shift in the left movement in Atlanta, and I think that this is the start of giving a voice to the people in a way that hasn't really been seen in a while in Atlanta and in Georgia, really. So, it's been really exciting to be a part of.

Armed Police Raid on Bail Fund for Cop City Opponents Is Attack on “Infrastructure of the Movement” - Democracy Now! - Air Date 6-2-23

AMY GOODMAN: , as we go to Atlanta, Georgia, where a police SWAT team, guns drawn, raided the Atlanta Solidarity Fund on Wednesday and arrested three people who had been raising money to bail out protesters opposed to the construction of a massive police training facility known as Cop City.

Marlon Kautz, Adele Maclean and Savannah Patterson were charged with one count each of money laundering and charity fraud. Warrants allege the three were, quote, “misleading contributors ... to [00:40:00] fund the actions in part of Defend the Atlanta Forest, a group classified by the United States

Department of Homeland Security as Domestic Violent Extremists.” As proof of money laundering, the warrants cite reimbursements from April 2021 to March of this year that total less than \$7,000 and were for “forest clean-up, totes, COVID rapid tests, media and yard signs.” The Atlanta Solidarity Fund issued a statement that it’s existed for seven years, quote, “with the sole purpose of providing resources to protestors experiencing repression.” To be clear, none of the arrested Cop City activists have been designated as domestic violent extremists, nor have they been convicted, just charged.

In March, prosecutors charged 23 forest defenders with domestic terrorism after clashes between police and protesters, less than two months after Atlanta police shot dead Manuel [00:41:00] “Tortuguita” Terán, a 26-year-old environmental activist. An autopsy concluded they were sitting with their hands raised up in front of their body when police shot them 57 times.

In response to the arrests Wednesday, the National Lawyers Guild issued a statement, quote, “in firm solidarity with the Atlanta Solidarity Fund and all of the Stop Cop City activists unjustly targeted by law enforcement,” unquote. They noted, quote “Bail funds exist to protect people’s right to dissent. They are necessary, legally sound resources that help people more safely access their constitutionally protected rights to speech and assembly by lowering the risks of financial ruin or indefinite jail time,” unquote.

The arrests come just days before the Atlanta City Council is set to vote on the fate of Cop City. Officials recently admitted the public cost of the project will top \$67 million — twice as [00:42:00] high as originally stated.

For an update, we go to Atlanta to speak with Kamau Franklin, founder of the organization Community Movement Builders.

Kamau, welcome back to Democracy Now! I mean, can you lay out what happened? As we look at this image of a SWAT team moving in, guns drawn, charging this group, ultimately — the authorities — with charity fraud, certainly someone like George Santos, who was just recently arrested, there wasn’t a SWAT team that moved in on him. Can you talk about what took place?

KAMAU FRANKLIN: Sure. Thanks for having me.

So, what took place was an escalation by the authorities, the state of Georgia, the city of Atlanta, on the infrastructure of the movement. So, approximately at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, along with SWAT teams — there’s [00:43:00] reports that there were personnel from Homeland

Security there — decided to back a truck up in a residential neighborhood, an armored vehicle, with armored police personnel, SWAT teams, to basically go in, guns drawn, as you stated, to arrest people on what essentially is — would be considered a white-collar crime and/or a financial crime, in terms of what the charges would be.

But this use of violent force against the Atlanta Solidarity Fund really shows that the real intent has nothing to do with any criminality, which has never taken place with the Atlanta Solidarity Fund, but this is really another way of destroying and attacking the infrastructure of organizing a movement, particularly against those who have been organizing against Cop City.

AMY GOODMAN: Wouldn't this, to say the least, be a deterrent to people who might want to donate to the fund?

KAMAU FRANKLIN: Well, apparently, this is [00:44:00] the hope of the Atlanta police and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation and, again, the governor, Kemp. But already the movement has stood strong. We found an alternative bail fund, a national bail fund, which is stepping in to support movement organizers and the folks who were arrested who were part of the Atlanta Solidarity Fund.

But, yes, the very attempt is to ruin the Atlanta Solidarity Fund, an organization, as stated, that's been around for over seven years, way before the Stop Cop City organizing and activism, way before even the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020. These folks have been around organizing and supporting movement activists and organizers, making sure that anyone who was arrested in Atlanta had an opportunity to receive bail, and instead of being locked up and waiting trial, that those folks could defend themselves on any specious charges. Once they were out, they could resume their lives. They could resume being active in [00:45:00] organizing. They are, you know, basically a needed infrastructure for organizing a movement, which the state and the city has gone after and attacked.

AMY GOODMAN: I want to go to Marlon Kautz, one of the three Atlanta Solidarity Fund organizers who were arrested on Wednesday. But they were speaking in February, after information surfaced that Georgia prosecutors were preparing RICO charges against activists who oppose the construction of Cop City in Atlanta. He's currently in jail.

MARLON KAUTZ: We understand that this movement is as broad as society itself. It includes environmental activists, community groups, faith leaders, abolitionists, students, artists, and people from all over. But police, prosecutors

and even Governor Kemp have been trying to suggest in the media and in court that the opposition to Cop City is actually the work of a criminal organization whose members conspire to commit acts of terrorism. In essence, they're trying to [00:46:00] concoct a RICO-like story about the movement.

AMY GOODMAN: So, Kamau Franklin, Marlon Kautz and the two others arrested remain in jail from Wednesday?

KAMAU FRANKLIN: Yes, they still are in jail. They have a bail hearing coming up today at 1:00.

And I should say, based on what Marlon was talking about, we've heard rumors for months that the other parts of the infrastructure of the movement would be attacked. We've come out with different videos showing support and acknowledging that this information, although could not be verified at the time, was something that was sort of laid at our doorstep, that other parts of the movement to stop Cop City would be attacked, because the city and the state were scared that, through all of their tactics, the movement has not gone away. In fact, it has grown.

And so, we think that the attack, when it finally did happen, you know, it came at a time when, as you stated, the city of Atlanta, through the City Council, is about to [00:47:00] vote to give funding to this training center, to Cop City, after it was exposed that instead of \$30 million, it would be \$67 million — double the cost — which they have lied about for two years, telling the public that it would be — and I say in air quotes — “only \$30 million.” In addition to that, the last City Council hearing, hundreds of people turned out to speak. Many were turned away. Over a hundred people were turned away from speaking. It was the largest gathering at City Hall to make comment and protest any ordinance and/or bill that the City Council has ever introduced. They knew that a repeat of that was going to happen this Monday, June 5th, when they're actually going to be voting on the resources, giving the resources to the Atlanta Police Foundation, a private foundation itself, which probably is the real entity that's a criminal nonprofit entity. That is what we think prompted the move by, again, the city and the state and the [00:48:00] police and the district attorney of DeKalb County to move now to again further criminalize this movement in the face of massive protest against Cop City.

Stop Cop City - Keyanna Jones - Air Date 9-17-23

KEYANNA JONES: The beauty of this movement is that it has brought together people from all walks of life, many people who otherwise honestly might not have known each other had it not been for this project. And what we've seen from the time that Cop City was introduced, because mind you, there was never any public appeal to say the City of Atlanta is considering building a police training facility at this location, we want to cut down this amount of the forest, you know, there was nothing that went out to the public to say, Hey, this is what's happening, what we're considering, come and give us your comments, let us hear from you. There were no town hall meetings where it was discussed among residents of the City of Atlanta or even DeKalb County about what Cop City would entail, [00:49:00] or the fact that they even wanted to build it and take our land in DeKalb County.

So when people found out about it literally at the last minute in 2020, in the midst of the pandemic, and as a matter of fact, the City Council still was not meeting in public in 2021 when there was the 17 hours of public comment that were given, people found out about that meeting at the very last minute. And let me make sure that I clarify that. In 2020, we saw the uprisings after the murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery here in Georgia, Rayshard Brooks, and also prior to 2020, numerous other individuals were murdered by police. So 2020 was a year of outcry against police terror and against them being able to get away with it. What happened in 2020 scared the local governmental infrastructure here in Atlanta and across the nation because what they saw was that the people realized that [00:50:00] they have the power and that they can use it, and if they use it, they can make things happen.

So all of these ideas about Cop City began to spring up. In 2021, without so much as an introduction, without a prior mention, all of a sudden, there is a council meeting where Councilwoman Joyce Sheperd from District 12, I believe, is introducing legislation to build Cop City. When people heard about that legislation, they immediately mobilized for the very next council meeting so that their voices could be heard. And that was in 2021 when people via Zoom gave 17 hours of public comment against Cop City, and despite what the people said, their so-called elected representatives in the City of Atlanta decided to vote for this project. What we [00:51:00] heard from then-Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, was that Atlanta would become a model for the nation.

So here we have the elected official who went into the agreement with the APF, and what happened after that is that people began to organize, because they saw

that the city council did not care what they said after 17 hours of public comment, so people got together and organized. I'm talking about massive protests in the streets, I'm talking about demonstrations outside of city hall, showing up to more city council meetings. Between 2021 and January of 2023, we had people who actually mobilized themselves to move into the forest, to live there, so that they used their bodies to protect the trees. While we had people who were mobilizing and organizing as forest defenders sitting in the forest, making sure that there were actually people there [00:52:00] to protect trees from being cut down, we also had organizers. who are working on the outside who continued to go to city council meetings, to talk to city council representatives, to try to get some understanding as to why the people's voices were being ignored.

In January of 2023, the first ever climate justice activist was murdered on US soil. Our fallen comrade, Manuel Esteban Paez Terán, who we know as Tortuguita, was murdered as they sat in a meditative position with their hands up, murdered for simply sitting in a tent in the forest that they wanted to protect. This is what we've been met with from law enforcement, from our so called governing bodies. We've been met with violence at every turn.

We held a week of action back in March of 2023. We were mobilizing daily just to pass out flyers, to march around [00:53:00] downtown Atlanta, to alert people and make them aware that these companies that they were patronizing downtown were also donating to Cop City, which is an oppressive institution. As we did that, we saw police officers show up in force with riot gear. We saw over 200 police officers kettle a group of about 75 marchers as we marched through the streets of downtown. They surrounded us with their weapons drawn. They even impeded the sidewalk so that we could not pass safely, just in hopes that someone would step off of the sidewalk so that they could charge them with something, just in hopes that someone would bump into an officer so that they could charge them with assaulting a police officer. One of the officers tried to charge protestors with some offense one day, as we gave out flyers downtown, [00:54:00] they really tried to tell us that we could not walk on the sidewalk and give out flyers. And we see later on we actually did have comrades that were charged with domestic terrorism for handing out flyers, flyers that contained public information that could be obtained through open public records requests here in the state of Georgia, but simply because those flyers named the murderers of Tortuguita, that is seen as domestic terrorism.

So in this movement, we have seen people show up in a very democratic way at council meetings, talking to city council members, making sure that they get the understanding of how things are moving in this process. We've seen that. We have also seen peaceful protests. We've seen people marching through the

streets. We've seen people sitting silently. We have seen people show up in the forest to simply occupy the forest, and we've also seen people murdered for doing so. We've also seen police officers [00:55:00] point a gun inside of a bouncy house at a music festival, a music festival that I had just left about half an hour prior. And had my children and my husband still been there, they would have been the ones in that bouncy house when the gun was pointed inside, because my two sons were not leaving that bouncy house. My husband literally had to stay there in that bouncy house, jumping with them because they were not leaving.

But when you think about the facts that we have had to endure, the inability to even attend a family event, a music concert, without the police showing up and exacting violence against us. Police showed up. They had mothers with their children held at gunpoint against a stage as mothers begged and pleaded for the safety of their children.

We had a person who was detained for running after his dog, and the officer told him that if he took another step, he was gonna put him down. That person is now sitting in an ICE detention facility [00:56:00] because he was charged with domestic terrorism for attending that music festival, for trying to run after his dog, but also for being Indigenous and not being from the state of Georgia, because what we saw at that music festival was that officers detained people, and they checked their identification, and if their identification was not from the state of Georgia, they arrested them in order to further the narrative that had been put out by Mayor Andre Dickens, that there were only outside agitators opposed to Cop City.

What we've seen in this movement has been some of the most insidious and the most insidious actions from Attorney General Chris Carr, Governor Brian Kemp, Mayor Andre Dickens, and all who fall in line behind them, what we have seen has been unprecedented. So we've had to show up in unprecedented ways. So we have embraced a diversity of tactics, meaning that we have decided to come at this from every angle. Because one thing that we know [00:57:00] is that if we don't do something, Cop City will not be the end of police terror in Atlanta or in this nation.

Stop Cop City Part 2 - Keyanna Jones - Air Date 9-17-23

KEYANNA JONES: I used to work for an organization that was founded by Stacey Abrams. They tout themselves as the premier voting rights organization

in the state of Georgia. When I worked for that organization and we brought up the issue of Cop City and organizing around Cop City and we became a part of the coalition against Cop City, Stacey Abrams wanted no part. Stacey Abrams did not even want the organization to have their logo on a flyer because it could be linked to her. Stacey Abrams has been particularly careful that her name is not linked to anything. She does not want the organizations that she has founded to put their names on anything that they do. I was shocked when we got a statement from Fairfax. But then again, I wasn't because we got a statement as it related to exact match of signatures, because this had to do directly with votes. But [00:58:00] we know that Stacey Abrams is not affiliated with Fair Fight, she's not affiliated with New Georgia Project, or any of the organizations that she has founded. They don't represent her, but she knows that people associate the name with her, and she has been extremely careful to separate herself from this.

President Biden has not said a word. John Ossoff and Raphael Warnock are the biggest disappointments known to man. They have yet to give condolences to Tortuguita's mother for their murder. And I happened to be in New York at Bard College for their commencement when Raphael Warnock gave the commencement address. And I had to interrupt him to ask him, What about Cop City? When are you going to talk to us in Atlanta? Because we've been trying to talk to you. And you won't respond. John Ossoff, we have been calling you, and you won't respond. There is a host of Democratic so-called leadership [00:59:00] in the state of Georgia, around Metro Atlanta particularly, and not one has spoken out against Cop City, save Representative Ruwa Romman, who has spoken out from the beginning and still holds the line.

SAM GOLDMAN - HOST, REFUSE FACISM: And I appreciate your perspective on that, And I want to just add that in addition to the silence, the main backers of Cop City have been Democratic Party elected officials. And that's part of the picture. The actions by the City of Atlanta under the cover of law smack to anyone who's looking with any clear eyes as suppression of speech and what are normally considered actions people use when they're trying to work inside the system. The latest legal attack on the movement is that the City of Atlanta has challenged and stood out for now the certifying and counting of signatures asking for a city referendum on Cop City. After these indictments, after the stopping of counting the signatures, what is the movement [01:00:00] doing now? I know you're not stopping, the indictments aren't stopping you, nothing's stopping you, but what are we doing now?

KEYANNA JONES: Well, the first thing that we did was, after the mayor decided to act a complete ass yesterday, we went ahead and we filed a motion in the 11th District Circuit Court to compel a judge to rule on what the mayor is

alleging, that the petition is now invalidated, you know, because of the stay of the injunction that was granted, all of this legal jargon that the mayor has tried to bring up to say, No, you can't do this, it's invalid. We immediately made a motion for a judge to make a ruling on this and to compel the city to do what it is supposed to do and verify these signatures. Because what we see is that the mayor knows that those 116,000 signatures, more than what he got [01:01:00] as votes in the last election, he knows that that signals that we will be successful on a ballot. So he's trying to make sure that that doesn't happen.

The next thing that we are doing is we are continuing to fundraise for the Cop City Vote campaign. People can go to copcityvote.com and donate because we do still have legal fees. We are still tied up in court with these people who want to continually obstruct justice and obstruct the right of people to vote and have their voices heard through direct democracy.

We also need people, wherever they are, to follow solidarity actions with the Stop Cop City movement. You can follow the hashtag #StopCopCity on all social media platforms to see where we are, what is going on, what we're doing, and what we're also doing is we are continuing to organize a community to mobilize people, to continue to come out not only to city council meetings and speak, to contact their city council members for a redress of [01:02:00] these grievances, but also we're continuing to mobilize people for direct action so that not only Mayor Dickens, but Attorney General Chris Carr, the state of Georgia, Governor Brian Kemp, so that they know that we are not going away quietly, and we are still encouraging people to donate to the Atlanta Solidarity Fund, to donate because it is not illegal.

A lot of what we are doing now, honestly, is simply educating people as to what these RICO charges mean, helping people to be comfortable with doing the things that they've been doing, so that they are not intimidated by this latest move by Attorney General Chris Carr, Mayor Andre Dickens, and Governor Brian Kemp. So that is how we are continuing to mobilize people. And more than that, we also continue our philosophy of solidarity and mutual aid. We are still standing together in community as a community.

Stop Cop City with Atlanta DSA Part 2 - Revolutions Per Minute - Air Date 8-23-23

LISA - HOST, REVOLUTIONS PER MINUTE: Yeah, I mean, it definitely seems like in so many different fights we need that direct confrontation and then also some [01:03:00] inside kind of changing of these other mechanisms of

power and you know, when you were talking about that, about people taking back their power, what I was thinking, too, is, as we're doing that, it's so clear what side the police are actually on, right? When we're seeing these confrontations, whether, you know, it's Standing Rock or what's happening in Atlanta or, all the social justice protests that were happening, you know, it was very clear that police were there to protect capitol and property.

You know, I've heard of situations. I know people in Pennsylvania who are doing tree sits to stop pipelines and, the police did not care that, you know, they were cutting down trees and like endangering the lives of the people. Like they were there to protect the pipeline. Not the people at all. And yeah, so no matter, you know, what fight we're fighting, seeing these very militarized, very violent police, even like abortion rights, I'm thinking in, like, New York, when there are people who are... our comrade Amy covers this all the time... people doing, like, counter-protests, the police are literally [01:04:00] there, like, protecting only anti-abortion protesters, or they're protecting the Proud Boys, you know, so it's very, very clear where they are in all of this.

And, you know, we have seen some massive, massive protests calling for things like defunding the police, fighting for abolition, but I think realistically, like, there have been very few victories. Like, I'm definitely thinking about New York City where, you know, our streets were filled with people and we have not defunded NYPD at all. You know, so kind of facing this massive change we need and how difficult it has been to get it, you know, what kind of keeps you personally motivated, or, you know, what's kind of the ethos of the comrades in Atlanta around this?

GABRIEL SANCHEZ: You know, it's crazy with the whole Black Lives Matter thing, because it's like, I felt like we got all of the negative press for wanting to change things, as if they had changed when they actually hadn't changed. You know what I mean? Like, if you look at the top 50 populated [01:05:00] countries [?] in the US, the vast majority of them either increased funding for the police or the funding stayed the same. That includes the City of Atlanta. They increased the police funding every year since the Black Lives Matter protests, and they did it again this year.

That is not what is happening, and yet when I talk to people all over the place, they think, Oh, they're defunding the police everywhere. It's like, where? Please tell me. It's also sucks in Georgia specifically because we also have an even more hostile state government on top of the city government. So they actually passed a law last year, I believe, or two years ago, that bans any municipality from reducing the police funding by more than 5 percent in any given year. So

they are also just preempting any progressive policies because they don't care about what the people actually want.

So, it is difficult, but I think as someone who's raised in the South, I'm used to not having a lot of victories. It's something that when you're in such a hostile [01:06:00] environment from your government that you learn to see the victories where you can because sometimes it can be smaller than what's happening in Minnesota, what happens in New York City, but like, it's still important victories.

For example we stopped, the progressive coalition stopped a bill that would have criminalized protesting a couple years ago. We've seen some of those bills pop up at other states, so like, for example, reducing liability for people who run over protesters with cars, for example, they tried to pass that here in Georgia. We stopped it. So, you know, it's one of those things where, like, there's a lot of play in defense in the South.

But also, I mean, I genuinely think that, again, the fact that this referendum effort has been so successful and has brought in so many people into the movement, I think that that is what gives me hope for the future. It started initially with Bernie, but I think what the next step after that is, is not going from the top down, [01:07:00] but coming from the bottom up and having these grassroots, like DIY, difficult, projects and movements that come together and bring the community together to start actually realizing that maybe we can actually make a difference in things.

And I think that's what this referendum effort has shown me. Is that there was a lot of people, especially after Torteguita was murdered, after all the domestic terrorism charges, after the raiding of the Atlanta Solidarity Fund, a lot of people were terrified and dejected. Like, they have been doing so much work, so much organizing for the past two years to stop this and nothing was happening. And I think this referendum effort has given those people hope again that we can actually make a difference. And so I think we have to continue doing stuff like this. This has to do with, you know, criminal justice and police, and the policing, but also with other issues too. With things like Medicare for All, with things like the living wage, with things like affordable [01:08:00] housing, like, this is building the blueprint for campaigns and organizing efforts that can be applied to anything that we want. It just requires the work, and it is very, very hard work, but I think people are starting to see that we can actually do it. And I think that's what drives me forward, and driving a lot of other people as well.

Final comments on understanding the movement cycle

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: We've just heard clips today, starting with *Rattling the Bars* introducing the Cop City project. *On the Nose* further explored the origins of Cop City. The *Police Accountability Report* delved into the corporate connections behind Cop City and how it's reported. *On the Nose* then looked at the story of the land upon which Cop City is slated to be built. *Democracy Now!*, back in June, looked at the legal action against the bail fund supporting the Cop City activists. *Revolutions Per Minute* discussed the referendum movement currently underway. *Democracy Now!*, from September, reported on the escalating legal [01:09:00] tactics resulting in RICO charges against cop city activists. And finally, Keyanna Jones spoke to the necessity of mobilizing in the streets and the violent response from police. That's what everybody heard, but members also heard two additional bonus clips. The first from Keyanna Jones calling out complicity for cop city in the Democratic Party. And, *Revolutions Per Minute* discussed staying motivated in the movement.

To hear that, and have all of our bonus content delivered seamlessly to the new members only podcast feed that you'll receive, sign up to support the show at bestoftheleft.com/support, or shoot me an email requesting a financial hardship membership, because we don't let a lack of funds stand in the way of hearing more information.

Now to wrap up, I just wanted to give some thoughts on the macro cycle of the police accountability movement, and I am having some of my own thoughts on this, but I'm also referencing an illustration and worksheet called "The Movement Cycle", so credit to that. [01:10:00] I just thought that some people listening might be thinking back to the uprising in the wake of George Floyd's murder, and thinking about how we've seemingly lost a lot of the energy we once had in this movement. So, you might be disappointed or frustrated, etc., but that is why it's important to understand the movement cycle. On the chart, I just have to describe it, obviously, from left to right, there is a series of phases, and running through the phases is a line that graphs the sort of emotional state of the movement.

The first phase is growing public anger. Now think back to the period of time between the Trayvon Martin killing and the George Floyd uprising. Anger was growing, the Black Lives Matter idea became a movement, there were demands for change and some half hearted reform. That was the growing public anger [01:11:00] phase.

The next phase is kicked off by a trigger event, leading to an uprising of some sort, also known as the heroic phase. Now, for Black Lives Matter and police accountability, in addition to the defund and abolition branches of the movement, George Floyd's death was obviously that trigger event.

The emotional state of the movement quickly rises to its highest point, called the honeymoon phase, before it begins to steeply decline. There are demands for change at this point, but of course they don't come fast enough, or at all. Political opponents start to muddy the water with disinformation, and they're painting the entire movement as violent radicals, and the emotional state of the movement, actually, eventually falls below the previous low point that it was at the trigger event.

And this is the disillusionment and contraction phase. The accompanying worksheet to this [01:12:00] graphic describes the contraction as being defined by the backlash of the state, media, and reactionary elements of the public, a decline in energy and numbers, and burnout among organizers.

So I would argue that Cop City is the most tangible example of the backlash by the state on the macro level to the Black Lives Matter movement and the police accountability movement more broadly. But it has also acted as a bit of a new trigger event, at least on the local level. So, you know, unsurprisingly, life is complicated and it won't always fit nicely into an infographic, but I still think that the broad strokes are there.

Now, continuing on to the right on the chart, the next phase after disillusionment is evolution, which is understood as a time of learning and reflection. This is followed by the establishment of a new normal and a regrowth of the movement as the [01:13:00] emotional state continues to rise. And all of this, hopefully, leads to the movement being more prepared than it was the last time when the next trigger event happens.

Another thing to understand about this cycle is that much of it happens beneath the surface. Arguably, only the heroic rise and honeymoon phase even breaks through to public awareness. So, if you're not deep in the movement, and you're wondering where the movement went and why it seems like it completely disappeared, hopefully now it's easy to understand why many at the heart of the movement are currently living through the disillusionment and evolution phases. But, understanding this as part of a natural cycle should, sort of ironically, lessen the feeling of disillusionment, because it shouldn't be seen as a failure of the movement that is causing the disillusionment. It's all just part of a very predictable cycle that leads to progress, [01:14:00] but through lots of ups and downs along the way.

And to this, to contextualize this particular movement in this particular moment in time, I would just add that in the middle of the honeymoon phase of the movement for police accountability, we also ended up right in the middle of a crisis of democracy in the wake of the 2020 election, through to January 6th, 2021, and beyond. So, it's not just that there was a natural ebb in the energy of this movement, there was also a very real reason why lots of people's energy would have been redirected toward defending democracy and away from police accountability.

Unfortunate, but true, and very understandable. So, what is there to be done with this information? I mean, basically, I just think it's good to have a broader perspective on the news so that we can understand it more fully with the help of that additional context. But also, if engaging in the police accountability movement is [01:15:00] something you're interested in, you shouldn't think of our current moment as a time of decreased energy that's not worth engaging in. Understand it as the time for learning and reflection. So anyone who engages now will be helping to build the movement back up so it's ready for the next phase.

That is going to be it for today. As always, keep the comments coming in. I would love to hear your thoughts or questions about this or anything else. You can leave a voicemail or send us a text to 202-999-3991 or simply email me to jay@bestoftheleft.com. Thanks to everyone for listening, thanks to Deon Clark and Erin Clayton for their research work for the show and participation in our bonus episodes. Thanks to our Transcriptionist Trio, Ken, Brian, and LaWendy, for their volunteer work helping put our transcripts together. Thanks to Amanda Hoffman for all of her work on our social media outlets, activism segments, graphic designing, webmastering, and bonus show co-hosting. And thanks to those [01:16:00] who already support the show by becoming a member or purchasing gift memberships at bestoftheleft.com. You can join them by signing up today. It would be greatly appreciated. You'll find that link in the show notes along with a link to join our Discord community where you can continue the discussion.

So, coming to you from far outside the conventional wisdom of Washington, DC, my name is Jay, and this has been the *Best of the Left* podcast, coming to you twice weekly, thanks entirely to the members and donors to the show, from bestoftheleft.com.