

Morning Mix

Protests in support of Eric Garner erupt in New York and elsewhere

By [Justin Wm. Moyer](#), [Abby Ohlheiser](#) and [Elahe Izadi](#) December 4, 2014

After a New York grand jury [declined to indict a police officer](#) in the death of a Staten Island man, protesters hit the streets of Manhattan and at least seven other U.S. cities Wednesday. Dozens of protesters were arrested in New York, though there were no reports of violence, in contrast to the looting and arson that broke out Nov. 24 in Ferguson, Mo., after a grand jury there did not indict Darren Wilson, the officer who fatally shot unarmed teen Michael Brown on Aug. 9.

A wave of protests erupted from Manhattan to Oakland, Calif. Thousands in New York marched in support of Eric Garner, a 43-year-old asthmatic who died after being put in a chokehold by officer Daniel Pantaleo on [July 17](#).

They shut down the Lincoln Tunnel. They shut down the West Side Highway. They shut down the Brooklyn Bridge, where officers threatened them with arrest if they did not move as a helicopter hovered above.

“How do you spell ‘racist?’” protesters asked. Their answer: “NYPD!”

Another chant: “Grand jury — bulls—t!”

As law enforcement officials and protest organizers prepared Thursday for another day of demonstrations in New York, police said that more than 80 people had been arrested during protests across the city.

New York Police Department Commissioner William J. Bratton said on “Good Day New York” that “we are not going to engage in mass arrests” and that the Christmas tree lighting in Rockefeller Center the previous night “went off without a hitch, didn’t it? There were no problems on national TV.”

House Speaker John A. Boehner (R-Ohio) said Thursday that [he still has “unanswered questions”](#) about the deaths of Garner and Brown and wouldn’t rule out having House committees hold hearings into the matter. The grand jury decision prompted Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. to announce Wednesday that the Justice Department will [open a federal civil rights investigation](#).

Following the grand jury’s decision, protesters in New York marched against traffic from Times Square toward Union Square. They staged a “die-in” at Grand Central Terminal and tried to disrupt the Rockefeller Center [Christmas tree lighting](#).

And they chanted the slogan heard around the country after Brown was killed by Wilson in Ferguson — “Hands up, don’t shoot” — as well as what may have been Garner’s last words: “I can’t breathe.”

“The lives of black young men, black children, they matter,” protester Florence Johnson [told CBS](#) at Times Square.

[New York Police Commissioner William Bratton reported](#) that about 30 people were arrested. No injuries were reported.

“I appreciate everyone that’s out there for my husband,” Garner’s widow, Esaw Garner, said Thursday on “CBS This Morning.”

She added that she was grateful for the peaceful nature of Wednesday night’s protests — and for the ongoing attention given to her husband’s death.

Eric Garner, a father of six and grandfather of two, died July 17 after Officer Daniel Pantaleo placed him in what appeared to be a chokehold during an arrest that was recorded on videos that have been widely seen and have contributed to the public anger. In the Ferguson case, the facts of the fatal encounter between Brown and Wilson remain subject to dispute, but the Staten Island videos offer greater insight into the circumstances of Garner’s death.

In one video, obtained by the New York Daily News, Garner is approached by officers, apparently for selling loose cigarettes. After a confrontation, Pantaleo places Garner in what appears to be a chokehold. Garner repeatedly tells the officer he cannot breathe. A second video shows Garner lying motionless on the ground for several minutes as officers wait for emergency personnel.

“Had it not been for the tape, for the people, for Reverend Al [Sharpton] putting it out there, he would have been just another black man killed, and it would have been over,” Esaw Garner said. “Three days after he died there would have been a funeral, he would be gone, and no one would remember his name. This way, his name will be remembered.”

President Obama, speaking Wednesday at an event in Washington, declined to comment specifically about the Staten Island case, referring instead to his plans to promote better relations between police and those they serve. Those efforts included an initial round of White House meetings.

On Thursday, [speaking at a college opportunity summit](#), the president noted that many people feel as though there is a chasm between America’s legal standards and how they are actually employed.

“Too many Americans feel deep unfairness when it comes to the gap between our professed ideals and how laws are applied on a day to day basis,” he said.

On Wednesday in Ferguson, a man who allegedly hit protesters with a minivan pulled a gun when confronted, as the St. Louis Post-Dispatch’s David Carson reported:



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A protest leader [told the Post-Dispatch](#) that eight protesters were hit, but police said no one was seriously injured. The man behind the wheel of the minivan was arrested. “We’re standing in solidarity with Eric Garner,” said [protester Elizabeth Vega](#), “another black life who clearly doesn’t matter.” Vega was among five arrested at a courthouse in St. Louis.

In Philadelphia, as the Associated Press reported, protesters disrupted the city’s Christmas tree lighting, shouting “No justice — no Christmas!”

Hundreds also marched in Oakland. — another center of protest after Wilson was not indicted last week — shutting down Market Street.

“I came down here because I’m disgusted about what happened,” Edward Collins, a 19-year-old protester, told [the San Francisco Chronicle](#). “It’s beyond a race thing to me. No matter what race you are, no one has the right to murder you.”

In Washington, D.C., a protest shut down Dupont Circle traffic.

About 50 people marched in Seattle, as [the Seattle Times reported](#). Demonstrators were also seen in Atlanta and [Baltimore](#).

“Black lives do not matter in this system,” Dean Steed, one of the organizers of about 150 protesters in Atlanta, told [the Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#). “And we’re out here for black lives.”

On Thursday, representatives from major civil rights organizations announced that 2015 would be a year for “jobs and justice,” starting with a national march on Dec. 13 in Washington, D.C. Rev. Al Sharpton had announced the march Wednesday, saying: “It’s time for a national march for a national crisis.”

Philip Bump in New York and Peter Holley , Katie Zezima and Ed O'Keefe in Washington contributed to this report, which has been updated multiple times.

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