

**DISPATCHES FROM  
CHARLOTTE**





- REPORTBACK FROM THE CHARLOTTE UPRISING
- REVOLT IN THE QUEEN CITY
- WELCOME TO THE END OF THE WORLD

# Reportback from the Charlotte Uprising

exposing it to uncertainty and transformation, must compose themselves into a plane of consistency. There should have been space and time established to meet and to discuss. We need churches, parks, radio stations, collective houses, centers, businesses, or any place that can host a public event to combat the idiocy of the reformers and the police. Perhaps a false organizational front group could have made a bold statement to the press calling for deeper and bolder forms of disorder. Perhaps a small band of dedicated people could have extended the imagination of the rioters with a well timed disruption of a news station – as occurred during the 2008 Greek insurrection – or with a highly destructive flash mob they could have renegotiated the balance of forces for the coming week. Is it too impossible to imagine a collective of herbalists and acupuncture students organizing a temporary clinic, advertising treatments for tear gas, pepper spray, rubber bullets? What recently-evicted apartment complex could have been taken over and transformed into a laboratory of revolutionary potential? These skills, powers, capacities, and tools do not develop overnight.

It is clear that something is growing between the No Dakota Access Pipeline blockade, the ongoing nation-wide prison strike, and the movements and uprisings against racially-motivated police killings. There has been a great outburst of protest energy since Ferguson, and especially since the beginning of the year. We must continue to elaborate on and intensify the insurrectionary process, to build what we can, where we can and smash what is within our reach. Living and fighting together. The powers established in the breakdown of apparatuses must be made irreversible, or else new controls will emerge which are less attackable, more obscure, more resilient. The most dedicated cannot satisfy ourselves with riots alone.

**Truth is in revolt.**

*R.I.P.*

*Keith Lamont Scott*

*and*

*Justin Carr*

AGITATORS INTERNATIONAL

September 2016

On Tuesday, September 20, 2016, Charlotte Police shot and killed Keith Lamont Scott, a disabled Black man, while he was reading in his truck waiting for his children's school bus. The very first response from the community was to grieve and call for accountability from the Charlotte Mecklenburg Police (CMPD). The CMPD responded by forcefully disrupted the gathering with officers in full riot gear. This quickly escalated the situation, causing an unplanned and intense riot where protesters took to the streets all night and into the early morning to fight back against the continued police terror and racist system that criminalizes Black people, murders Black people, and continues to get away with it.

Like all across America, Charlotte is in the middle of a process of re-segregation – relegating its black population to worse education, housing, health, and economic prospects, while maintaining this inequality by force: with its police. The city's history of school re-segregation provides a good insight into this process. In the early 1970's Charlotte was considered a model of success unparalleled in a majority of the country for ending segregation in public schools. This success lasted nearly three decades until late 90's when a white father sued the Charlotte Mecklenburg School system for denying his daughter access to a certain school and the courts sided with the parents.

Today a third of the district's 168 campuses are segregated by poverty and half are segregated by race. What city officials would call amazing progress, improved community integration over decades, began to unravel between 2002 – 2014 and now Charlotte has become a cautionary tale of a school system disregarding research. The outcome is increased racial and socioeconomic isolation and is indicative of widened inequality in the broader community. Charlotte is experiencing an intensifying in structural racism, which is directly tied to police violence. Fast forward to three years ago: a Charlotte officer shot and killed Jonathan Ferrell, an unarmed black man who was asking for help after his car broke down. The case ended in a hung jury and all requests for a retrial were denied. Another horrifying yet unsurprising case of a system failing an entire race of people and the police murdering black men with impunity. The rising tensions on both a community and national level contributed to the rupture that occurred on Tuesday night and is continuing into the weekend. As of the night of Wednesday, September 21, protests were high energy, emotionally charged, and chaotic. The police attempted to clear the streets, even at the cost of human life, Justin Carr, who was shot in the head at close range.

The evening started off with a rally and vigil in Marshall park, but a few hundred people quickly took the streets, blocking intersections and gaining ground for an hour or so. The march had no internal trajectory and march marshals were absent, leaving the creative potential of protesters in their own hands. At this point police on foot and on bike followed the perimeter of the march, breaking up conflict between people in cars trying to run through crowds blocking traffic and protecting private property. There were murmurs about potentially taking the highway until a few gunshots were heard. People panicked and hit the ground running. Screams were then heard and sounds of gut-wrenching grief erupted as people began to swarm a police bike barricade. Blood was everywhere. They shot someone. They shot him in the head. Carr was quickly rushed to the medics. The mood instantly changed to rage. Many people were in tears and people were screaming. "They killed him, they did it again!!" Once again the police rather than protesters are the most dangerous people in the area.

The CMPD began to feel intimidated as the area was swarmed and they deployed tear gas and quickly dispersed the crowd from the area using their state legitimized violent tactics to disrupt protesters from expressing their rage and exasperation. As media reports focused on the destruction of property, the common media narrative where 'anarchists'

*against the police charge that seems imminent. A woman starts shouting to no one in particular that "these white people are not with us and need to leave." She walks over and pushes the piece of concrete out of their hands. A large group sees this and encourages the kids to pick the concrete back up. While she keeps yelling to leave it, a black man picks up the piece himself and starts breaking it. The police tear gas and clear the area.*

### **The Necessity Of The Party**

*Riot police charge down the on-ramp towards our highway blockade. Everyone starts scrambling up a hill towards what we thought was the street, but is actually a light rail station. Finally we have enough rocks and we launch dozens from the bridge down onto the cops below. One of them must have had good aim cause a few tear gas canisters land up on the bridge. We move on through a hotel, down several flights of stairs and back onto the street. Windows drop everywhere. A 7-11 is being looted. Rocks tossed at bicycle-mounted police miss and smash windows behind them. "Smash that shit, Smash that shit!" someone screams at the top of their lungs as we come over a hill and see a brightly lit Bank of America lobby. The entire block of it is destroyed. Police are more determined to disperse us now and we are a little skittish ourselves. We've been holding space well for a few hours but our ability to do this is becoming limited.*

On September 22nd, three days after the shooting of Keith Scott, another demonstration was scheduled to take place in Uptown Charlotte. The arrestees from the night before were still locked up, reportedly at the requests of the National Guard. Congressman Robert Pittenger tells the news that all of the protesters hate white people "because white people are successful." Right wing news outlets manufacture and exaggerate "racial" tensions which were minimal or nonexistent. Left wing personalities deliberately and naively surrender agency to the police, repositioning the insurgent party as a mere protest movement shamefully victimized by an excessively militarized enemy.

Hundreds gathered and managed to briefly shut down I-277. Police launched tear gas and rubber bullets into the crowd. Clergy, lawyers, leftists, and others used physical force and intimidation to insure the relative docility of the crowd, at times shoving and ejecting people wearing masks, throwing bottles, or even cursing at the police. Here, counter-revolutionaries, reactionaries, pacifiers, and reformers hope to outmaneuver the insurrection and to crush its revolutionary horizon. This should be impossible.

The experimental powers and rhythms that are splitting America open,

fight them off with. The golf cart was a major material advantage for the police, who were able to use it to transport riot cops very quickly. It played a key role in breaking up a crowd that had been rolling together for hours. It gave them a mobile dimension that isn't typically associated with riot control in the US, but is the norm in places like Greece or Catalonia. Developments like this must be countered in the future. Toward that end, we submit: these golf carts are like any other, have normal tires which can be punctured and are window and doorless leaving occupants vulnerable to attack. They are mounted with a loud noise cannon and fit up to 5 fully outfitted riot cops (if 1 or 2 stand on the back).

### **Quickly, On Intra-Crowd Dynamics**

On the night of the 21st the crowd seemed to be almost entirely unified in its objective: Occupy spaces outside of police control and loot and destroy everything in them. With Uptown Charlotte being nothing more than a glorified shopping district, there's really nothing to spare. It took only a few flash bang grenades to send the pacifiers running home for the night. Window smashers could expect cheers to accompany their courage. Hundreds of people were helping one another mask up, set things on fire, kick back tear gas, make projectiles, and stay safe from the police. However, hostilities were not solely directed at the police and property, and to dwell on "racial" dynamics inside and outside of the crowd is of grave strategic importance.

1. White rioters were more or less accepted by the majority-black crowd, as was also the case in Milwaukee. As an influential participant declared, "Everybody's black tonight," after watching some white people participate in the riot.

2. White motorists were subjected to a kind of "shibboleth," being asked to raise their fists and declare that "black lives matter." For those who refused, their vehicles were smashed or stomped. This did happen occasionally to black motorists as well, suggesting a general anti-social current in the crowd, but the overall tendency was to "racially" order the situation.

a. This mainly was occurring when there was nothing to set on fire, no police, no windows to smash.

3. Therefore, it seems that "race" was used as a vector for determining ethics.

*We've been holding the intersection by the Hyatt for over an hour, setting fires and destroying the hotel. Two masked kids start moving a large piece of concrete into the crowd so that it can be broken up into projectiles to use*

or 'outside agitators' co-opt and escalate peaceful protests led by black people in the community have remained absent thus far. It is apparent, regardless of the facts, that the law and media protects the officer, not the victim. Media reports that the protester was killed as the result of an internal civilian conflict but all eyewitnesses say it was the police. The amount of conflicting information coming out of Charlotte is hard to handle right now. It's easy to speculate, but if the cops aren't actively stirring some of this misinformation up, it's certainly helping take some pressure off of them by overwhelming people with information to process. We can only hope that when the police are shown to be the manipulative liars they're trained to be, people will remember all the distress and harm they've caused – on top of murdering Keith Scott – and make them regret every confusing detail they have cowardly and arrogantly spun throughout this whole ordeal.

This monopoly on media and legitimacy must be eliminated. Trust the black voices. Trust the people who were there, who witnessed it. I don't need to see the video, I don't need proof. I was just a few feet away when it happened, I heard it and ran over to see people screaming, and crying and holding each other. They said a cop did it. That is all the proof I need.

When people regrouped there were two lines of riot cops on either side blocking the area where the man was shot. Protesters clashed against them, throwing things, screaming, linking arms and holding hands. Police shields were covered in blood. This lasted for 20 minutes until the police issued an audio warning to disperse before the area became an 'unlawful zone.' You could see behind the line of riot police that they were lining up with handcuffs and zip ties preparing for mass arrests. Many people took the warning and left, many people stayed and bore the consequences. Those who left began to smash windows of cop cars and businesses, taking merchandise and other products, and there was little internal resistance to a diversity of tactics, leaving people with large degrees of autonomy in their actions.

I know this article's readership is typically more sympathetic to these tactics, but in case this article is shared and read beyond the typical reader base, I want to include this message:

"If you think that destruction of property is more 'violent' or more upsetting than the people (specifically POC) who are murdered by the police, I beg you to re-evaluate your position, and reconsider your stance on what is and is not 'violence'. I think your definition of what

constitutes violence and/or a legitimate form of protest to be narrow and soaked in privileged. Peaceful protesting is a luxury only available to those safely in mainstream culture. So maybe I do support what you would call 'violence' if it's the last resort of a community whose entire life was subjected to unending violence enacted by both the state and by racist individuals. Institutional power, the police, and society is an inherently violent hegemony with few forms of escape. And with this analysis I think it is more appropriate to deconstruct power dynamics between individuals and ask yourself "does this reinforce the current state of power disparities? or does this negate them?"

As of Wednesday night a State of Emergency has been declared, and the National Guard has been deployed, upping the stakes and changing the tone significantly. The protests & march on Thursday increased in number significantly, but the march remained 'peaceful.' This march had more internal organization and was lead by the local Black Live Matter group and local and regional Clergy of varying faiths. As the march took the streets, stops were made along the way in front of the courthouse, the police station, and the jail. The police and the National Guardsmen were carrying their assault rifles, but did not assault the protesters until riot police eventually showed up on I-277 and escalated the situation by shooting tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse the crowd. The Mayor issued a mandatory curfew from beginning September 23 at midnight to 6am, to be enforced by the CMPD.

Protests will continue on into the weekend and the foreseeable future, and tremendous support is necessary. The exact number is unconfirmed, but I am hearing reports that 75 people were arrested Wednesday night. This number will only increase. If you live far away and can not show up, please support these efforts in whatever way is within your means.

Donate to the bond fund: [durhamsolidaritycenter.org/bondfund](http://durhamsolidaritycenter.org/bondfund)

ed. Trash cans were set on fire and police cruisers were smashed with hammers. Elements in the crowd attacked random cars, while others smoked weed and rapped Lil' Boosie's now famous "Fuck the Police," the anthem of the movement.

When the line of riot police finally approached the crowd, under a hail of stones and some fireworks, they began shooting more tear gas and rubber bullets. The crowd split into at least two sections, engaging in vandalism and looting whenever possible for the rest of the night.

*A guy is in agony while his friend dabs his eyes with a hoodie to stop the burning. I take someone's bottle of water, make a hole in the cap and flush his eyes. He pops back up to his feet, pulls something out from his pocket and yells, "Who knows how to pull a pin from a grenade?" Before throwing one of the police concussion grenades back at a line of bike cops. "Yeah we got that shit too!" After a few more rocks they bike away from us. The crowd cheers.*

### **It's Going Down in Uptown**

The shooting of Keith Scott occurred in an area of North Charlotte, far away from the cluster of financial towers and economic powerhouses that Charlotte is well known for. It's remarkable to note that the riot on Wednesday occurred in the very heart of Charlotte and that the demonstrations that have followed continue to happen in this area. This sets it apart from the rioting that recently took place in Milwaukee. On the second night of rioting in Sherman Park (Milwaukee) almost every business in the area had either been burned, looted, or smashed with the only immediate targets being the police and media. In Uptown Charlotte everything was there to be destroyed, even the Nascar Museum.

Of course the fact that the riot took place in a major financial center also meant that there were different limits. Most urban centers have been totally renovated to meet the new demands of counter-insurgency that followed the last great wave of rebellions in the 1960s. Everything that can be bolted down is bolted down, cameras are everywhere, and people are funneled seamlessly via "smart" infrastructure between various business and shopping corridors. Throughout the night, scarce projectiles made it difficult to defend against police incursions. In fact, without tactically experienced persons, there may have been almost no projectiles at all. This proved a major stumbling block by the end of the night when a barricade was not defended and a relatively small number of riot police in an armored golf cart were able to disperse a much larger group of fighters who were unable to come up with anything to

## September 21 - Day 2

On the second night of disorder, it took only thirty minutes to unmask the ethical polarization underpinning the entire Black Lives Matter movement. What is commonly described as one movement is, in reality, at least two. Even this is a simplification. The capillary structure of power has likely produced 5, 10, 20 bases of affective re-aggregation and transformations all under the same slogans. In any case, it is clear that there are forces invested in policy-friendly restructuring around diversity trainings, indictments, body cameras, review boards, etc. These factions – of which the organized BLM “chapters,” the left wing groups, the churches, the student organizations, and the “white allies,” more or less comprise the base of – are the obvious revisionist tendencies in a historical sequence opened by insurrectionary black proletarians, anarchists, communist groups, street gangs and angry working class elements.

At only 7:30 pm, on the night of September 21st, 600 marched to a church in downtown Charlotte. Just as the prayers began, masked youth in the crowd interrupted. “Fuck this Jesus shit” they screamed. A clear demarcation was made between the elements that wanted the night to proceed into the disorder of the night before and those trying to keep it from reaching that threshold. Most of the crowd chased the police away. A small group of cops sought refuge in the Omni Hotel, which was attacked. Justin Carr, a demonstrator, was shot in the head. Blood spilled across the sidewalk. The situation had changed. Hundreds ransacked the NC Hornets store just around the corner. A convenience store, a sandwich shop.

*We receive messages that someone has been shot at the Omni Hotel. We park and run toward the demonstration. Just as we catch our breathe, tear gas is fired into the crowd. Flash bang grenades explode by our feet. To my left and right, masked people are kicking and throwing back the spinning canisters on the ground. I pull a t-shirt over my face. Hundreds of people are cheering and jumping, a few are coughing. A young man with tattoos all over his torso and hands looks to me and says, through his mask, “This is it! Welcome to the end of the world!” In front of me, a giant cloud of gas thinly veils a wall of police in riot gear.*

For an hour the crowd controlled the streets around the EpiCentre, utilizing police barricades and dumpsters to block the road. The rioters methodically destroyed the veneer and windows of the Hyatt Hotel and other businesses over that time, while the barricades were left undefend-

# Revolt in the Queen City

*The following are personal accounts by two participants from the 2nd day of riots and protests that have shaken Charlotte in the aftermath of the Kieth Lamont Scott's murder. On the first night, impromptu protests escalated into battles with projectiles, a 3-hour highway takeover and bonfires on I-85, and an attempted looting of Wal-Mart. On day two, the Governor declared a state of emergency, and the National Guard is now patrolling the city. Large protests have continued, including a third takeover of the highway, albeit with a generally more peaceful character.*

\*\*\*

I rolled into Charlotte, a town that I've visited for years but never lived in, full of apprehension and skepticism. Charlotte is a banking capital of the South, known more as a sprawling corporate suburban hell than a bastion of resistance. But the first day of the uprising was inspiring and irresistible from afar, all the more so knowing the deep oppression and dispossession that goes into making the wealth that Charlotte is known for. So me and a couple friends packed a car with some cases of water and banners and other supplies to share, and made our way down for Day 2.

By 7pm, Marshall Park was already packed—between 500 and 1000 people easy. People were milling about, mostly ignoring the rotation of men on bullhorns at the front of the open amphitheater, and instead taking the time to give hugs to friends or debate the unexpectedly militant tactics of the night before. As a crowd it refreshingly lacked the highly managed, ‘nonprofit activist’ feel of most demos where I live now.

# Welcome to the End of the World

The march left fast, and quickly took over one, then two lanes of traffic. Before almost any time had passed, the crowd was led by a few folks into a church parking lot. There were audible displays of disappointment immediately—most folks didn't seem to know that this was where we were going—and people started yelling and muttering shit like, "Fuck this Jesus shit," "It ain't Sunday," and "We don't need that submissive religion."

One brave woman just started screaming, "I wanna march!" as she started to leave the parking lot by herself. The entire crowd followed her, heading in the direction of the police station downtown. I felt that rare feeling of new things being possible. It was only 7:45.

\*\*\*

The crowd ascended the stairs of the Epicenter, a three story open-air mall, and started gathering on the second floor. As more people amassed, I heard folks asking each other, "Now what? Why are we here?" Other curious voices continued, "This is a weird place to march to; it's so enclosed. Where are our exits?" Crews started exchanging their observations. "We could get out that way if we needed to. Yo, over there's an exit." As more folks poured into the space, I heard a woman shout, "The only way to go is up!" and folks started climbing the stairs and the escalators. A minute later, we heard the first glass shatter. Some people ran but quickly calmed as I heard shouts of, "Stay together! Don't scatter. We good, y'all!" There was a mixture of groans and cheers, laughter, "hell yeah!"s. Immediately some folks grabbed a huge rolling cooler and started wheeling it towards the interior railing of the third floor. Others warned, "Hold up. Tell folks to move!" People by the railing shouted, "Hey, everybody, move out the way!" And once it was clear below, folks tossed that fucker over the edge.

\*\*\*

The crowd was just getting dense enough at the intersection of Trade Street and Tryon Street to really stop cars from passing through. I was standing next to a child on a bike when a slow-moving car sped up to halt right in front of us, nearly hitting us. "What the fuck?!" I screamed at the car while the kid stood firm behind his bike, stoic as fuck and glaring at the young man driving. Then the car lurched forward, bumping me and the kid's bike. I slammed my hands on the passenger side of the hood of the car and shouted, "Fuck no! The fuck is wrong with you, tryna run over a kid?!" I heard a woman next to me cry out, "That's my son! You ain't gonna run over my son!" I kept my hands braced on the

Nothing can close the window of mass disaffection opened by the revolt in Ferguson. The unending tide of criticisms leveled against the insurrectional movement, the pacifiers in the left-wing and "community" organizations, the National Guard and the resurgent fascist grassroots have given a staccato structure to the rebellions, but have so far failed to stamp them out completely. No falsehood can reverse the intoxicating effects of the truth.

No one can doubt the absolute strategic clarity of the insurgents on September 20th, who broke with the insane delusions millions hold onto which deprive them of basic fighting skills in light of racist police executions. In a beautiful and creative development on a common tactic from the last two years of revolt, they rushed onto I-85, looted the contents of stalled semi-trucks and burned them in the middle of the interstate.



hood as people started to swarm the car and yell at the driver that he better fall back. Though the night was young, people were amped and it was clear after the Epicentre that folks already felt powerful as a group, down to wreck some shit and ready to look out for each other.

As I stared at the dude in the driver's seat, my friend ran up to me and put an urgent hand on my shoulder. "I saw what happened, and I know you're really mad right now, but that dude is packing. Did you know that?" I spun around silently to face my friend. "Yeah, I didn't think you could see it from here. You do you, but he's dangling a revolver out the window right now." Some folks on my side of the car, the passenger side, started hitting and kicking the car. The driver got out and walked slowly around to the people fucking with his ride. They all started yelling and flexing at each other, and a handful of cops soon rushed in to surround the shitbag driver, telling him to get back in his car and GTFO. He complied, and the crowd let him drive off.

\*\*\*

"Stop throwing bottles!" "Don't give them a reason to use violence!" I milled around the intersection of Tryon and Trade while some folks tossed plastic water bottles at the line of riot cops and others screamed at them to stop. One woman stood in the plant beds outside the Ritz Carlton yanking up handfuls of tiny shrubs, hurling them over the crowd and into the line of riot cops. I was wearing a mask when a young Black man approached me, looking at me with narrowed eyes. "I heard about you, white boy. I read about you outside agitating shit. I could drag your ass all through these streets, so I best not catch you throwin' shit." My gut reaction, from a decade of being misgendered, was to retort, "I'm a woman." But, realizing that totally wasn't the point, I tried to just say calmly, "Man, I haven't thrown shit tonight." He looked me up and down again and reminded me, "I better not catch you throwing anything. We ain't about your kinda shit."

\*\*\*

It was clear that the cops were holding back. They were fucking scared all night, unprepared for the storm they had unleashed. People were furious—earlier that night a shooting took place near the Omni, and multiple protesters said it was police who shot the protester. The man's name was Justin Carr, he was shot in the head at point blank range, and he died the next day.

For awhile folks came and went in smaller groups of maybe 50 from

the intersection of Trade and Tryon, pushed to leave by a new wave of tear gas, and branched off into surrounding blocks with their anger. On multiple occasions a group of bike cops would follow us, only to be pelted by rocks and bottles from the crowd, and would bike off in a hurry. I tried to block them once by adding a trash can to the mix; I got it loose from the sidewalk but it was too heavy to do much with other than roll it somewhat pathetically in their direction. But wait! Two more people came up behind me after I left it—a perfect projectile! I ran back, and with our combined efforts we sent the trash can, which held discarded protest signs, hurling through a massive bank headquarters' window. It's a pity that capital itself doesn't shatter so easily.

\*\*\*

Down the hill from the line of riot cops, a hill that was now littered with clothes hangers and shoeboxes thanks to the expropriation of the Charlotte Hornets store, people were hanging out casually. Every now and then a flash bang grenade went off. Folks were sharing boxes of Snickers and Twix bars, beers, water, and other supplies recently donated to the movement by local capitalist shops. We threw in our own supply of liberated Gatorade and coconut water—it's important to have health-conscious alternatives, and electrolytes are crucial y'all.

In thinking back a couple days later, that was maybe my favorite time of the night. Just hanging out, smiling and meeting people, talking about race and the police and the state, screaming 'Fuck 12' at the helicopter, being both sad and angry and joyous and exhilarated. I saw a sweaty older white man in a Sublime T-shirt and we sang the lyrics to "April 26, 1992" together. He said it wasn't about race, but about fighting back together. I told him I thought it was about both.

A lot of the time I was one of only few white faces in a sea of deeply angry, fierce, and courageous Black folks who were risking their lives to do something many had only dreamed of. No 5 or 6 hours of rioting together was going to erase the suspicion and skepticism that a lot of folks held towards me, much less the real structural positions of privilege and power that come with white supremacy.

But with only a couple exceptions, the conversations I had and questions put towards me—about why I was there, about what I wanted, about who I was with—held an honesty that anonymous twitter-sniping and college campus-style identity politics can never approach. In between the flash bangs and bouts of coughing, I tried to be honest in return, to say I was there for Keith Lamont Scott, for all the Keith

as folks scampered with me, I was nervous about the possibility of a human landslide, us all tumbling over each other and down this hill into the highway. "Help each other!" I heard my friend say. Others echoed, "Y'all let's take care of each other!" A man next to me was just standing next to a wall, helping everyone who ran past him. I saw a man fall from a tight spot, grabbed his outstretched arm, and yanked him back up, "I got you, man, you're good." "Thank you!" he said as he scuttled up. We poured out right onto the rocky rail track of Stonewall Station, where people started scooping up rocks as we ran. I could hear a faint clinking sound as rubber bullets fired by police on the highway below struck the railing nearby.

I saw a man throwing rocks at the glass of the waiting area, so I stopped running to avoid being hit by a rock or having glass shatter on top of me. "Hold up!" I called to my crew to alert them, and the man with the rock saw me, dropped his hand down, and told us to run on. Somebody called, "Man, not now, we gotta go!" and the dude joined us as we ran. We followed the crowd turning left into the stairwell of the station, a disconcertingly finite space. Still people hurled rocks through glass doors as we descending the tight stair case. Running as fast as I could without tripping, and jumping the last half of each set of stairs, my arms kept slapping against those of the shirtless man I was racing next to. Again I was reminded of the physical power of our group. I thought, "I don't know how long this staircase is, and I don't know how many cops will be at the bottom of it, but I'm ready to fight next to this dude." When we poured out onto the street, there were no cops, just another group of people who'd taken a different staircase. "Alright y'all, let's regroup!" someone shouted, and we kept moving.

that!” As folks grabbed shit to smash the place, I heard people looking out for each other, “Okay, y’all, move back!” “Watch out now.” Somebody with a 2x4 like a battering ram charged the window. On the fourth try, it shattered, and everyone cheered. Folks threw rocks through the other windows, and somebody tagged” R.I.P. Keith Scott.”

\*\*\*

We spilled over the on-ramp and the grass, my friend shouting at me, “This is fucking crazy!” People went racing onto 277 with no lights or anything to make them more visible to highway drivers, and a couple cars sped by. I arrived to just a few brave souls standing their ground in one lane in front of one car. The car was stopped, but still had plenty of space to get around with some maneuvering. It lurched forward at an angle towards me, and in the moment that I saw those headlights, I thought I was about to be run over. I juked to the left in terror, and ran right into a brave man who was sturdy as hell and giving no fucks. When I crashed into his body he didn’t respond at all, but to me it was an immediate and visceral reminder that if we were brave together, maybe we could get some shit done. Reorienting in that collective power, I wrapped my hands around the rock in my pocket as I ran towards the car.

“It’s a fucking beamer?!” I shouted as I got close. Folks on the highway were having words with the driver, but I couldn’t hear what was going on. I heard a woman say, “He’s Black, let him through.” And he found the space he needed to drive away. A man called back to the woman who’d spoken, “I don’t care if they Black. If they don’t stick their fist out in support of us, they ain’t getting through. They gotta stick their fist out!” A few minutes and several passed cars later, someone else said, “Man, we gotta stop lettin people through. If we’re taking the highway, we gotta take it 100%.”

The group I was with moved quickly up the highway, and we started to get separated from the dozens and dozens of folks continuing to amass near where we met that first car. I decided with my crew to head back towards that group to get stronger numbers and feel out what people wanted to do. As we approached, I saw a huge swath of riot cops coming down the on-ramp. “Y’all, there’s as many of them as there are of us,” I said to my small crew. “Yeah,” my friend agreed. “It’s time to get off the highway.” We had agreed earlier to exit up a hill that didn’t have fencing like the rest of the highway, and now dozens of people were using the same narrow route. The hill was steeper than I expected, and

Lamont Scotts, but also that I was there for myself, because I hate the police deeply and personally.

Maybe it was because other folks saw our crew there the whole night, after a lot of other people had left, throwing down as hard as we could, or maybe it was those conversations about whiteness and the police, but by the end of the night I felt safer and more cared for than in a hundred peaceful marches, where I know damn well that most of the other people there wouldn’t do shit if I got snatched by the cops.

\*\*\*

After teams of people re-purposed some metal gates to barricade Trade St. and failed to set fire to a dumpster, the crowd slowly retreated back to the intersection of Caldwell and Trade. Our numbers were a little smaller, as multiple crews had left earlier in cars to target other parts of the city, partly due to debates that broke out about what might be more materially and politically strategic to loot than Hornets gear.

When I got to the intersection, there were already a couple trash can fires, and the partly smashed window façade of the Hyatt hotel was completely covered in white tags of “Black Lives Matter.” Cars with spinning rims pulled up, filled with people leaning out the windows or standing on top, to block the intersection while we all danced to Lil Boosie. Besides “Hands Up Don’t Shoot,” the most common chant of the night was probably, “Without a badge you a bitch and a half, Fuck the Police, Fuck the Police.” Periodically someone would run up and toss concrete through the hotel windows. I passed around a foamy can of Bud Light, and tried to remember ever feeling this happy.

I remember one tall woman who started chanting, “Smash that shit white boy!” at a kid who was kicking out the windows, to cheers. She saw me laughing and gave me a strong hug. A white dude in a collared blue shirt who worked at the building tried to stop some people from smashing it; he was jumped and chased away by the crowd.

\*\*\*

“We been here too long, y’all.” “The riot cops are getting closer.” “They can just surround us here.” “Ok, y’all, let’s move!” And we headed South down Caldwell from Trade. As we approached the Hilton Inn’s glistening glass facade, somebody at the front of the crowd yelled out, “That looks too good!” I laughed with dozens of people in agreement. “Don’t that look too good?” the same voice asked. I shouted back, “That looks way too good!” among a chorus of “Hell yeah!”s and “We need to get

