

These NBA Stars are Taking Police Violence Protests to Basketball Court

More NBA players joined ongoing nationwide protests against police violence on Tuesday night, as dozens of demonstrators again briefly blocked a California freeway.

Renewed protests erupted last week after a grand jury decided not to charge a white New York police officer over the chokehold death in July of Eric Garner, an unarmed black father of six.

Los Angeles Lakers star Kobe Bryant and other players donned T-shirts with the words "I CAN'T BREATHE"—Garner's last words in a widely watched video—while warming up at the Staples Center for a Tuesday night home game.

Their move came a night after Cleveland Cavalier standout LeBron James and others wore similar shirts before a game at the Barclays Center in the Brooklyn borough of New York.

The decision not to charge Pantaleo came roughly a week after a Missouri grand jury had failed to indict white police officer Darren Wilson for fatally shooting black teenager Michael Brown in August in the St. Louis suburb of Ferguson.

The two killings have highlighted strained relations between police and black Americans, rekindling a national debate over race relations in the country and spurring weeks of protests in major U.S. cities.

In Berkeley, California, a left-leaning city with a history of social activism, hundreds of people faced off against a line of officers in riot gear outside police headquarters on Tuesday.

"All these incidents—it's not just one occurrence. And that's

why I'm outraged," said protester Marsalis Johnson, 19, a bike mechanic from Berkeley, who was protesting in nearby Oakland.

"As a young black man, I always feel like a target."

Later, dozens of demonstrators briefly made their way onto State Route 24 in Oakland, snarling traffic before being pushed off by police. California Highway Patrol spokesman Daniel Hill said some protesters threw rocks and incendiary devices at officers, while some tried to launch fireworks at police helicopters.

Hill said about 13 people were arrested. Berkeley police said six people, including one juvenile, were also arrested overnight.

A planned meeting of the Berkeley City Council was canceled earlier on Tuesday after demonstrators vowed to shut it down. An area station of a regional commuter line was closed in what officials blamed on a "civil disturbance".

The previous night, more than 150 protesters were arrested around Berkeley after shutting down a major freeway and throwing rocks at police.

Bridging the Divide

Footage broadcast by CNN also showed dozens demonstrating inside New York's Grand Central Terminal on Tuesday night, hours after New York Police Commissioner William Bratton vowed to repair relations with poor and minority communities.

He said the department would retrain its members in nonviolent ways of making arrests, on the same day that New York police officers shot and killed a man who stabbed a rabbinical student from Israel in a Brooklyn synagogue – a shooting that Bratton said appeared justified.

"The reality is that there is a divide between the police and some people in communities that need us most, but that divide

can be bridged,” Bratton told a New York business group. “The reality is that the people and the police can be partners.”

The National Basketball Association said on Tuesday it would take no action against players, including LeBron James, for wearing the “I Can’t Breathe,” shirts.

NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said he supports players voicing their opinions on social issues, but would prefer they abide by the rule that stipulates players wear clothing made by Adidas, the league’s official apparel provider.

Police in Phoenix on Tuesday released the name of Mark Rine, the 30-year-old white officer who fatally shot an unarmed black man during what authorities described as a struggle last week. Roughly 200 activists took to the streets, demanding his identity be made public.

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