



Witnesses in Minneapolis, some capturing the arrest of George Floyd on their cell phones, plead with police to get off of Floyd. This is a still image from the video of a body camera on one of the arresting officers. (Courtesy: ABC 13 Houston)

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Seven minutes and 46 seconds\*. That’s how long police officer Derek Chauvin knelt on George Floyd’s neck. If you haven’t seen the May 25 video of Floyd’s arrest then it’s likely you don’t own a screen. Floyd died in the ambulance before reaching the hospital. An autopsy revealed he died from “asphyxia due to compression of the neck.”

What followed were days of sometimes violent and destructive protests that began in Minneapolis and spread across the nation. Even with the risk of a deadly pandemic, protesters vowed to make their voices heard. One of the common themes was: Black lives matter.

Of the 20 rounds shot by police into the darkness of her Louisville apartment, eight bullets entered the body of 26-year-old Breonna Taylor who was asleep in her bed. Although her killing occurred nearly six weeks before Floyd’s, the protests in Louisville blew up with renewed energy after the video of Floyd’s killing went viral.

The video from August 23 shows Kenosha police shooting 29-year-old Jacob Blake multiple times in the back as he attempted to enter his vehicle. Violent protests erupted in the city. Two

days after the shooting a 17-year-old vigilante is seen on video shooting three protesters with an assault-style rifle, killing two.

This past spring and summer were violent and deadly. But it's not the first spring and summer where the nation saw racial and civil unrest that resulted in killings and deadly protests.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was in Memphis on April 4, 1968 to support African-American sanitation workers who were on strike. He was leaving room 306 that day when he was shot and killed on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel.

Violent protests broke out in more than 200 U.S. cities that lasted for two weeks. Forty-three people were killed and more than 3,500 were injured in the unrest.

On June 5, 1968 Robert F. Kennedy was in California for the state's Democratic presidential primary. After celebrating his primary victory to a cheering crowd of supporters at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, he exited through the kitchen. He was shot several times and died a day later.

In August of that same year the Democratic National Convention was held in Chicago. Tens of thousands of protesters had gathered outside while Hubert Humphrey was accepting his party's nomination inside. Chicago police and the protesters clashed at Lincoln Park after the police lobbed tear gas into the crowd. As the protesters dispersed, police beat them with clubs. Film shows many of the police who continued to club protesters after they had fallen to the ground.

Many have noticed the similarities between 1968 and 2020. Racial and civil unrest seemed to be rampant. And, like Donald Trump, Richard Nixon, the 1968 Republican presidential nominee, ran on a platform of "law and order" claiming he could quell the violence.

In June of this year, the website *Vox* did a story comparing the protests in 1968 to this year's. Heather Ann Thompson, a professor of history and Afro-American and African Studies at the University of Michigan was interviewed for the piece.

"There seem to be so many similarities," Thompson said. "Because racial injustice just seems to be baked into the DNA of this country, periodically and throughout history there come these moments when people just can't take it anymore. They feel that the injustice is so particularly glaring or there's such a compendium of unjust events one right after the other that they explode."

The video showing the knee on the neck of George Floyd as he took some of his last breaths was seen by many as particularly glaring. Then, as Professor Thompson said, there were more. A whole series of unjust events, one right after the other. And just like 52 years ago – it just exploded.

*\*Editor's Note: The Hennepin County Attorney's Office acknowledged that the length of time was off by one minute in June. Charges will not be changed.*