

Scout Schultz: Remembering Means Fighting

Mourning a Queer Activist and Anarchist Murdered by the Police

CrimethInc.

October 5, 2017

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On September 16, anarchist, anti-fascist, engineering student, and queer activist Scout Schultz was shot and killed by police on Georgia Tech campus in Midtown Atlanta. This loss has shaken Scout's friends and family and terrorized many others, including activists, queer youth, and those with mental health concerns across campus and the city at large. Two weeks after Scout's murder, Scout's lover and close friend Dallas Punja took their own life. (Both Scout and Dallas used they/them pronouns.) Dallas described being traumatized by police sirens and police lights after Scout's killing. These two tragic deaths drive home what is at stake in the conflict that pits anarchists and queer youth against police and the repressive society they uphold: it is a question of survival itself.

In the following account, we analyze the strategies that the authorities and their flunkies are using to suppress the reaction to Scout's murder. The forces of order aim to punish the students and anyone else thought to have participated in the rebellion that took place on the Georgia Tech campus two days after Scout was killed. The long-term goal is more ambitious: they want to make revolt unthinkable, rendering us morally incapable of responding appropriately to the murders and oppression they inflict on us. This is not about the machinations of police and bureaucrats on a single campus, but an entire repressive society.

These reflections are dedicated to angry, scared, and desperate people everywhere. Even if we haven't met you yet, we care about you. The first and most important thing you can do to help create a better world is to survive. Thank you for everything you've done to survive until now, whatever you had to do. Let's find each other and create a world without police or homophobia, in which education is not a commodity and human life is not held cheap.

The Execution

On September 16, a phone call was made to the Georgia Tech Police Department describing a "man [sic] with long hair, carrying what appears to be a knife and maybe a gun." Later, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation would claim that it was Scout who made this call.

Around midnight, four Georgia Tech police officers encountered Scout, who was walking bare-foot and carrying a small multi-tool. In a video posted online, Scout yells at the officers to shoot, and they oblige. Scout is shot in the heart and dies. Suicide notes were found in Scout's apartment. This immediately became important for the repressive strategy, as the police, administration, and many students began to deploy the narrative of "suicide by cop," reframing Scout as the attacker and the police as the true victims.

The Consequences

The following Monday, September 18, hundreds of students, workers, faculty, and bereaved friends gathered at the Kessler Campanile at Georgia Tech to hold a vigil for Scout. Many young people were crying and holding candles. It quickly became clear that this vigil was also a part of the repressive strategy, as administrators and student bureaucrats refused to allow Scout's closest friends to speak. The event became a photo opportunity for an administration determined to conceal Scout's death beneath a veneer of unity and campus pride.

After twenty minutes, the event managers declared that the vigil was over. Many people in the crowd were confused, others angry. A large section of the crowd began yelling about the

police, the underfunded counseling facilities, the toxic culture of campus life. Around 100 people departed from the vigil, most donning masks, and confronted the police outside of GTPD headquarters. There, police attacked the procession and were attacked in return. In the ensuing melee, the police arrested three people and beat many more; a police cruiser was set on fire. The arrestees were charged with felonies and the corporate media posted their mugshots on television and internet outlets.

We Heart GTPD: Setting the Stage for Repression

The following morning, the Georgia Tech Marksman Club was already present on campus with tables and chalk. Their signs read “We Love You GTPD” and similar messages. They encouraged students to chalk positive messages to the police on the sidewalk. Online, a fundraiser was launched for the police department, which raised nearly twice as much money as the fundraiser for the arrestees. T-shirts reading “I <3 GTPD” began selling.

The campus administrators deployed a disingenuous discourse about “outside agitators,” anarchists, and anti-fascists who had invaded the campus intent on destruction. This justified the mass deployment of alerts and emails to faculty and students framing what had occurred and an intense militarization of campus as police, federal agents, undercover officers, and helicopters encircled the area for the rest of the week.

Starting immediately, the neo-fascist organization Identity Evropa resumed “#ProjectSeige,” posting stickers and posters around campus and the surrounding areas, ostensibly hoping to utilize the outrage drummed up by GTPD and campus administration as a recruitment opportunity. This symbiotic relationship between the administration, the police, and an explicitly white supremacist organization is worth noting.

On the Georgia Tech subReddit, a popular online forum for students and faculty alike, the discourses of police, campus liberals, and neo-Nazis commingled. “Suicide by cop” and “anti-antifa” rhetoric went uncontested for days.

The Daily Caller, a far-right news website run by Fox News’ Tucker Carlson, argued that the revolt on campus did not in fact emerge from outsiders, but from the student body itself. Some sections of the far right are interested in fostering the perception that universities across the country are developing an insurgent left-wing culture, typified by the anti-fascist revolts at UC Berkeley. The strategy behind this argument is to plant the idea that in order to defend the “American way of life,” it is necessary to crack down on student organizing groups and supposedly liberal educators and curricula.

Several left-wing and progressive student groups discreetly distanced themselves from any proportional response to Scout’s murder, submitting paltry demands to the administration. Many members of these groups are well-meaning, but any willingness to collaborate with administrators and police will be used to pathologize those who refuse to collaborate, enabling the authorities to portray them as unreasonable, dangerous, and possibly insane.

On Friday, September 22, when a small group of Scout’s friends attempted to hold a vigil and sit-in at the counseling center, police shut down the campus. Classes and interviews were canceled, helicopters circled overhead, and administrators encouraged teachers to cancel classes, claiming falsely that “antifa” was going to start a riot. Instead, undercover police attempted to intimidate

the crowd while right-wing students yelled “Harambe” jokes at mourners—an alt-right racist dog whistle referring to a gorilla shot and killed when a child entered its enclosure.

GTPD Begins Rounding up Students

In the days following the revolt, GTPD began posting blurry photos on their Twitter feed of alleged participants. Nearly all of those pictured were black and many of the pictures seemed useless apart from fostering the impression that the crowd was composed predominantly of non-students and “outsiders.” At the same time, campus police directed students to Leedir.com where they could anonymously submit footage and photos of the event.

On September 27, an interdepartmental operation took place in which APD, GSUPD, and GTPD arrested a Georgia State University student on charges of misdemeanor inciting a riot for allegedly participating in the previous week’s demonstration. Two days later, on September 29, another GSU student was pulled from class and given identical charges. On October 2, a third GSU student was arrested.

The GT administration and police department hope to round up as many participants in the September 18 demonstration as they can. Regardless of whether these charges stick, they aim to create a chilling effect on the GT campus and potentially on college campuses across the country.

The administrators want their police to be able to kill a student on campus without any scandal erupting. This is unprecedented in recent US history, but the norm in places like Indonesia and Belarus. Now, they are arresting non-students to play on the fanatical micro-nationalism they have cultivated on campus, which they previously used to rationalize the brutal gentrification of the Home Park neighborhood where GT is located.

Leedir, LiveSafe, and Techno-Policing

The administration on campus and the police have been using LiveSafe and Leedir, two tech startups, to facilitate the repressive process.

LiveSafe: crafting a reactionary narrative in real-time

The administrators are encouraging students, faculty, and campus police to use the LiveSafe platform. According to their website, “students, faculty, and staff are deputized to provide crowd-sourced intelligence, while campus security can send mass emergency notifications through LiveSafe’s easily integrated command dashboard.” With this tool, the authorities were able to instruct students to return to their dorm rooms and stay off campus, insisting that a “violent protest” was underway and students were in danger. Across campus, young people could be seen either flocking to the sight of the burning car, or running fearfully to their rooms or cars. In this way, an informal curfew was enforced.

Since then, the authorities have been able to use LiveSafe to draw potential snitches to their other tool of choice: Leedir.

Leedir: weaponizing photography and film

Leedir is a tool developed by CitizenGlobal, an LA tech startup whose claim to fame is using this technology to coordinate data analysis in the wake of the Boston Marathon Bombing and to repress young people in Santa Barbara for revolting against the police during *Deltopia* in 2014. Leedir enables a client such as GTPD to refine the data aggregated from social media posts, news articles, online videos and photography, CCTV footage, and anonymously submitted media. Where LiveSafe deputizes individuals directly, hoping to transform everyone into a cop, Leedir weaponizes the data produced even by unwilling collaborators, gathering data and collecting submissions to host “in the cloud” using Amazon Web Services. A few years ago, when campus unrest erupted in Keene, NH, Leedir was used to make 25 additional arrests.

Who Are the Outsiders?

In the weeks following the revolt, a clear picture is beginning to emerge about the “outsiders” that the administration and police are seeking out.

The outsiders are black people. Georgia Tech has already pushed the black population out of Home Park in its attempts to compete with Georgia State and other campuses to gentrify downtown.

The outsiders are queer. Student representatives, administration, neo-fascists, and good liberals have all claimed that it was “outsiders” who started the revolt following the vigil on September 18 and who invaded campus again that Friday for a vigil. The march was led by gender-queer and non-binary youth behind a “DEFEND LGBTIA” banner. Are these people not allowed to react to the execution of their friend?

The outsiders are “crazy.” Online and in official statements to the press, students and authorities have relentlessly argued that Scout’s suicidal demeanor justified their execution. For them, this simple reality closes the book on the incident and anyone who says otherwise is either opportunistically attacking the engineering school or is simply another crazy person in need of a reality check.

The outsiders are anarchists and anti-fascists. Identity Evropa, the GT Marksman Club, GTPD, and the school president were quick to blame anarchists and anti-fascists for the burning of the cruiser and the clashes with police. Liberals and progressive groups have echoed their claims. Is it true that only those without any political convictions have a right to enter Georgia Tech campus?

The outsiders are service workers, unemployed people, homeless people, manual laborers, and single parents. Many GT students aspire to work for weapons manufacturers or technology companies. Their insistence that demonstrators have come from “outside campus” has cultural connotations: now that GT is so expensive, and the adjacent neighborhood so gentrified, and the campus culture so passive and reactionary, it must be the plebian elements in the city at large or even from the suburbs who caused the violence.

In a sense, all this is true. Now that the factories on Howell Mill have been transformed into luxury condos, the manufacturing facilities in Mechanicsville are rotting empty, and public housing is shuttered, it must be the case that many of those enraged by Scout’s murder do not live on campus. Now that the HOPE scholarship has been gutted, anti-immigrant laws continue to

drain campuses and neighborhoods of their diversity, and community colleges are being bought by larger universities like GSU, it is probably true that not everyone who showed up to grieve the loss of their friend can afford higher education.

But we cannot look to legitimizing factors like identity, neighborhood, occupation, and the like to justify taking the sort of action that Scout's death demands of us to ensure that the police never dare murder another person. The "outsiders" who stood up for Scout have justified their own behavior rather than seeking the approval of administrators who wish to excuse murder. It is that fact—the self-legitimizing anarchy of those who rebel—that has made them outsiders in the eyes of authorities who intend to dictate the discourse and monopolize the legitimate use of force.

Defending Scout's Memory

We have to respond to all these provocations by regaining the initiative. Scout was an anarchist, an anti-fascist, and a queer activist on and off campus. Only by continuing to advance a diverse and multifaceted revolt against all the economic and police controls in this society can we defend ourselves and each other against further repression. When the campus administration and the Atlanta area police are forced to respond to crises of legitimacy, finding themselves embroiled in scandals and hostilities, they will be unable to come knocking on our doors or drag us out of classrooms. Efforts to support arrestees have been ongoing and organized, but they must continue until the charges are dropped or the trials are adjourned. The bail fund must be replenished with donations and fundraising efforts of all kinds.

Scout's memory and the revolt taking place in Scout's name could be used to blackmail young people across the country into silence, serving as a warning shot against the rebellious energy of the angry and desperate everywhere. Or they could ignite more expressions of love and outrage, becoming an inspiration to revolutionaries for many years. Let's be intelligent and creative. Rather than waiting for large crowds to join us, we have to create the conditions in which people can come together in mourning and courage, so that no one ever again must die like Scout, Dallas, and all the other people killed by this homophobic, repressive society.

Let's get going. The past depends on it.

Appendix: Timeline of Events

09.16: Scout is shot and killed by GTPD on campus.

09.18: A massive vigil gathers on campus. Following the vigil, a masked crowd clashes with police and burns a police cruiser.

09.19: The GT Marksman club celebrates the police on campus while administrators and police initiate a repressive campaign against the movement. Throughout the week, the neo-fascist organization Identity Evropa distributes posters and stickers around campus parroting the discourse of administrators and police.

09.22: A small vigil takes place on campus, surrounded by right-wing hecklers and militarized police. A small teach-in occurs at which students and staff vent their frustrations. Over the weekend, a faculty meeting with the administration explodes as teachers and staff yell at the president and board of regents for not taking responsibility for a student's death.

09.27: A GSU student is arrested on campus for alleged involvement in the vigil and subsequent demonstration. Two anonymous individuals throw hundreds of fliers around the Georgia Tech career fair reading “We Remember Scout Schultz—executed by GTPD” and “No Apologies” with the image of a burning police cruiser.

09.29: A GSU student is pulled out of class and arrested by GTPD.

10.02: A third GSU student is arrested in connection with the demonstration and vigil.

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Retrieved on 23rd April 2021 from crimethinc.com

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