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**NEW YORK** 

# 'We're not driving the bus for the cops to arrest protesters': Bus drivers across U.S. defy police



By CLAYTON GUSE

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS | MAY 31, 2020



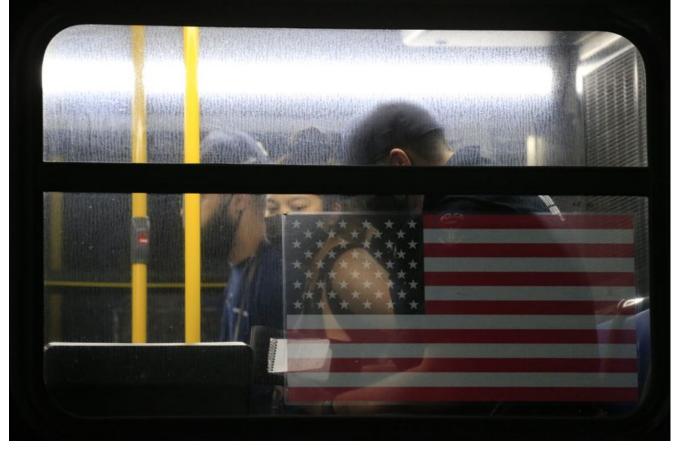




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Activists are detained by the New York Police Department on an MTA bus as a rally is held in response to the police killing George Floyd in front of Barclays Center on May 29, in Brooklyn. (Justin Heiman/Getty Images)

Minneapolis bus driver Adam Burch on Wednesday was asked by his supervisors to volunteer to drive arrested protesters during the city's demonstrations over the killing of George Floyd.

Instead of complying, Burch, 32, started a petition calling for his colleagues to avoid helping the city's police department, which is at the center of nationwide protests over police brutality against black and brown people.

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What followed was a national movement of transit workers standing in solidarity with the protesters.

Burch's union, Amalgamated Transit Union, publicly supported the petition. On Friday, a bus driver in Brooklyn followed suit by refusing to transport people arrested by NYPD cops during another protest.

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A protester is pictured on an MTA bus after being arrested outside the Barclays Center in Brooklyn, New York on Friday, May 29. (Gardiner Anderson/for New York Daily News)

By Sunday, Transport Workers Union, which represents transit workers in major cities like New York, Philadelphia and San Francisco, issued a statement telling drivers that cops may not force them to turn their buses into paddy wagons.

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Burch said he was arrested by police and detained on a public bus in 2016 while protesting the murder of Philando Castile, a black man who was shot and killed by a white cop.

"From my own personal experience the police department expects to use Metro Transit buses when they're trying to make mass arrests," said Burch.

Volunteering for the shifts meant extra pay for bus drivers, something that's hard to come by as the coronavirus pandemic has cratered transit service across the country.

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Pay bumps for Minneapolis transit workers became even harder to come by on Thursday, when the city's mass transit system shut down entirely amid the protests.

A protester is pictured on an MTA bus after being arrested outside the Barclays Center in Brooklyn on Friday, May 29. (Gardiner Anderson/for New York Daily News)

"My co-workers last week debated volunteering for the shifts and taking the overtime pay. But I said, 'Do you want to assist the police department that was involved in such a heinous murder?'"

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Safety of bus operators is a major concern for union leaders during the protest, said Ryan Timlin, president of ATU Local 1005, which represents Minneapolis transit workers.

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"Public transit should not be used for these types of things," said Timlin. "They let a police precinct burn down, what the hell is going to protect a bus from burning down?"

The risk of bus drivers falling in the line of fire between police and protesters hits close to home for John Samuelsen, a longtime New York labor organizer and international president of TWU. He said bus drivers directed to transport arrested protesters during

the Occumy Wall Street movement in 2011 were nanner enroyed by cons

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# **Clayton Guse**





Transit Reporter

Clayton Guse is the transit reporter at the Daily News. A graduate of DePaul University, he's covered the country's two largest public transportation systems, the MTA and CTA.

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