

the fight for RIGHTS

Graduate faces arrest during Black Lives Matter demonstrations

Hand in hand they stood. Against the screams of police telling them to leave, against tear gas and shattered windows, through the intensity of the moment, they stood.

This is the scene **Barinwa Wiwuga**, grad, witnessed when she attended a Black Lives Matter protest in Marion Square in May 2020 during the national unrest following the George Floyd shooting. Upon arrival, she said she was instantly overcome with emotion at the sight. She instantly ran to join the protesters' united front as soon as she saw the officers try to break up their stance. Soon enough, the officers started to arrest many people there, stating that the protest was an "unlawful assembly". Little did Wiwuga know that she would become one of those arrested.

"I looked to my right and a police officer kind of pointed at me. I knew I could not run at that point. I did not know what to do," Wiwuga said.

She met with who she said was a kind officer, who talked her through the moment and helped explain the situation. Still, as thoughts raced through her pounding head, the situation escalated with every second.

"As he was zip tying me, two more police officers started coming over as if I was struggling," Wiwuga said. "It did not make any sense because I was complying with everything, I was sitting there conversing with him."

Wiwuga ended up being put in a van and driven to the Charleston County Detention Center in North Charleston. At the time, Wiwuga was 17, and police decided not to press charges, so she was released. Regardless, the experience has changed the way she sees the world forever.

"I didn't understand arresting people in a park. Every time I go to a protest, there is always going to be that anger about the entire situation that you are protesting for, but also that happiness that so many people are out here to help you," Wiwuga said.

Another Wando grad, **Peyton Raybon**, attended the same protest that day. After seeing so many protests erupt on television nationwide, it was surreal for Raybon to experience one within Charleston.

"We were there for maybe 20 to 25 minutes, and then things started to get a little rowdy. People started to throw water bottles and little things at the police," Raybon said. "Eventually the officers started to employ tear gas, and that was definitely a moment that stuck out to me."

Despite the possible dangers of the protests, Raybon and her friends marched the grounds of Charleston with clear motivation, never once forgetting what they were fighting for.

"Racism is not just a black people problem. It is a worldwide problem. It is everyone's problem. There should be no reason that somebody feels unsafe or uncomfortable just based on their skin," Raybon said.

In a world that is quickly changing with every day, **Maegan Strawther**, 12, is determined to be a part of the change and have her voice be heard against the opposition.

"I think we should have open conversations in classes. I get that it can be uncomfortable for some people, but if you don't have these conversations, people will never understand," Strawther said.

For people like Wiwuga, Raybon, and Strawther, it is hard to be a bystander in a world of injustice and need for change. For them, it is time to create a better future for the next generation.

"I feel like with something this big that is affecting me, I have to do something. Systemic racism is definitely going to affect me and anyone who has Black in them. At this point it is fighting for something bigger than just me, it is fighting for something that is going to affect so many people," Wiwuga said.

**Story by Lily Higgins
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"RACISM IS NOT JUST A BLACK PEOPLE PROBLEM. IT IS A WORLDWIDE PROBLEM."



KNOW YOUR VOICE: (above) An unknown protester yells on a bullhorn during a demonstration in downtown Charleston. "Not everyone is there for the same reasons, but everyone generally has the same goal. I saw people from every age group, area, and class. Protesting for any reason is exercising a constitutional and fundamental right... I think these are incredibly important because of the response we got from the police," **Charles Brindley**, 12, said; photo by h. musi

two students TWO PROTESTS



AUGUST 29, 2020

"I believe the protests are important because the Black community has been enduring police brutality for too long and enough is enough," **Hannah Flint**, 12, said.

"I went to a peaceful march... it wasn't a march of violence, but of a march of mourning. It was powerful seeing black voices speak up and telling us they want better because they deserve better," **Lola Hansen**, 12, said.



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