

Why Are People Out in the Street?

Voices from the Protests

“I got tired of sitting at home feeling anxious and helpless. As an undocumented organizer, I recognize that now is the time to stand up for abolition and justice for all. Regardless of my status, the Black community is looking for support from everyone. I know that my freedom is tied to their freedom.”
Johana

“We can A) invest in communities and give people what they need. Or B) invest in prisons and police to brutalize people when they act out because they don’t have what they need. I protested because America has chosen to do the latter.” *Richie*

“Because I don’t want to live in a country where the authorities murder with impunity. That is a more existential threat than Covid-19.” *Karine*

“Two hundred fifty years of slavery. Ninety years of Jim Crow. Sixty years of separate but equal. Thirty-five years of racist housing policy. Current police brutality and murder. I’m protesting the illegitimate authority of the USA and the LAPD.” *Robert*

“It’s time to dismantle and reform ‘police culture’ in this country.” *Ashley*

“Because police officers have abused their power and run rampant for too long. They have been viciously murdering people with impunity. It’s systematic oppression upheld and reinforced by white supremacy.”

“Because I could’ve been George Floyd.” *Joe*

“I protest a system that knelt on the neck of a Black man until he died because it is the very same system that not only has killed countless other Black men and women, but has killed thousands of Americans of all races by failing to protect us effectively and successfully in a global pandemic. ... America is broken and has been broken for quite some time, and I couldn’t live with myself if I told my future children that I did nothing at all to effect change.” *Janay*

“Friday night ..., in front of my home, I exercised my First Amendment rights, feeling the same overwhelming anxiety and pain from another Black person being killed rush back. ... There has to be a change.” *Toni*

“We have lost our way. We have lost our humanity. And we have definitely lost whatever pretense we had of a democratic society.” *V.H.*

“When there is a police shooting, with the chaos that often is involved, I can understand there might be two sides to the story. But to see the video of a white police officer slowly and deliberately killing a Black man, suffocating the life out of him minute by minute and keeping up the pressure almost two minutes after the man has no pulse: There is no excuse. It is murder, plain and simple. The other officers stood and watched it happen. There is no excuse for their behavior, either. They were complicit.”

“Because Black Lives Matter. ... We should be investing more in what people need to survive and thrive — housing, food, schools, jobs — not adding to our already bloated police budget.” *Victoria*

“Being out on the streets today was so empowering and peaceful. People were looking out for each other because we knew things could take a turn for the worse in an instant. That is the reality that so many Black people have had to adapt to for centuries.” *Johana*

“The right question to ask: Why are you not protesting? Unlike the previous generation who was able to turn a blind eye to police brutality and allow systemic racism to persist with little to no accountability, our generation — the most diverse generation in American history — is saying ‘Enough!’ We will not bear this oppressive and racist system we have inherited. We want change now, not later. We are not asking for it, we are demanding it!” *Jorge*

“Why isn't EVERYONE protesting? Six years after Ferguson and Eric Garner, law enforcement is still getting away with killing Black men on video. How is that acceptable to anyone?! I am proud to be one of many non-Black people marching with our Black brothers and sisters, chanting, ‘Say his name: George Floyd,’ ‘Prosecute Killer Cops’ and ‘No Justice, No Peace,’ especially because I am a Korean American who is aware of the L.A. riots in 1992. I saw people of all races [protesting] today. No, I cannot know what it is like to be a Black person in this country, always under threat of getting killed just for being Black, even while sleeping in my own bed or watching TV in my own living room, but I can try to understand and fight for them.” *Karen*

“How the Covid-19 pandemic has been handled, leaving huge parts of society left without healthcare, due process, or a future points out the ZERO representation by any political party or leadership along the way.” *Dave*

“In solidarity with Black Lives Matter. I'm white, and want to make my support visible in some way.” *Ian*

“Because I'm sick and tired of hearing that the system is broken. It's not broken; it's doing exactly what it's meant to do — disenfranchise Black and Latino [people].”

“Because as a white person I can no longer be silent! My complacency shows agreement, and that is not OK. Jesus stands for the disenfranchised. As a Christian, I need to stand for the disenfranchised.” *Carol*

“Injustice, injustice, injustice. What has this great country become? A place where people are suffering more every day with unfair treatment and the bashing of basic civil liberties and human rights.” *Philippe*

“Because I can’t breathe. I can’t breathe. I can’t breathe.”

“I went because it was the right thing to do. For years I saw things in this country that made me angry and was too afraid to go to the streets, telling myself, ‘What good will it do anyway?’ So I made donations and wrote strongly written letters, but what good did any of that do? Clearly not much. So I needed to be there physically, in the community, not just showing support in the shadows, but proud and out loud.” *Quinn*

“Hearing Mr. Floyd call out for his mother in his last moments of life broke me. I sat on my car bawling. I’m a mother of three sons. My sons look to me for comfort when they fall or are cold. They look for Mom to comfort and nurture them. Mr. Floyd called out for his mom to comfort him. That shook me. Enough is enough. Cops can’t keep killing our sons, brothers and husbands and getting off with a slap on the wrist. It ends now. We’ve been asking for help for years. Do you hear us now?” *Yesenia*

“When the Rodney King video came out, I rejoiced thinking the world would finally see what we dealt with daily. I thought they just didn’t know — I didn’t realize they just didn’t care. Then Latasha Harlins was killed, shot in the back of the head on video after paying for her purchases. Her murderer got the same sentence as a man who’d abused a dog. ... I’ve long since forgotten the names of the innocent Black people murdered. ... Those names got mingled with the ones my elders taught me about (Emmett Till, George Stinney, etc., etc., etc.), But worse, we keep adding to the list: It has grown longer than my memory. This is why I protest.” *Misty*

“End of the police state. Return of civil liberties and constitutional right as a U.S. citizen and as a human being of this planet. End Trump's blatant corruption.”

“I came out today to tell the cops I was coming after their jobs, not to riot. I came out today because this country has to have a moral reckoning. White people have to confront the system we’ve built that oppressed Black people in the country and dismantle it. I came to tell the mayor to spend less on police bonuses and overtime and more on mental health crisis teams, more on homelessness services and less on rubber bullets, like the ones that were shot at me today. This country MUST change.”

"I am white and I am ashamed and outraged every time a Black citizen is killed by a white police officer. This has been going on for decades and enough is enough. Police officers are sworn to protect and to serve all citizens of the community. They do not have the right to kill these citizens, then make up a cover story about 'resisting arrest.'" *Jodi*

"I am protesting because I'm tired of all our actions being a powerless scream into the void. All the accumulated stress from each new horror story of inequity is like a wire holding my jaw shut. For the first time, it feels like people can listen. I hope this movement can be a light that makes it starkly clear what the world is like."

"The need for change to the police system. For the police union to remove itself and to set up a new system from the ground up."

"Police unions have for too long fought the changes needed to change policing. There is great injustice in how police ... treat minorities, people experiencing homelessness, and other disenfranchised groups. The city has cut services, but is giving police raises, and the so-called progressives on the City Council say nothing." *Rick*

"We cannot afford to be neutral in situations of injustice. Honestly, my heart is hurting — it's broken. Right now, it's in the news because the violence was filmed, but Black communities and my brown brothers and sisters see this day in and day out. The scars of colonization and white supremacy are burned into our DNA through generational trauma of rape, murder, and looting of our ancestors. [People of color] wear this pain every day, we carry it inside us always; we just can't suppress this trauma any longer." *Natalie*

"I'm protesting against the benefit of the doubt given to law enforcement in case of police terrorism against communities of color. ... Why aren't you protesting?" *Absalom*

"In the words of Fannie Lou Hamer, I'm plain ol' sick and tired of being sick and tired! For too long the police departments in OUR country have behaved like legal entities of the KKK. Yes, there was a lot of looting and property damage and that is wrong, but so was the looting of Africa of its people; so is the damage to the properties of humanity." *Grant*

"I am protesting our failure to reckon with history, and to make reparations in the wake of it. I am protesting because Black people being killed every day for things I do without fear, by the same forces that, at their roots, were founded in order to catch and return people escaping slavery. I am protesting because people I love live in fear of police every day, people I love are dying slowly in cages because they can't afford bail to get out, or because the systems that put them there are more focused on punishment and erasure than on healing and accountability. I am protesting because police don't make

people safer, and incarceration does not serve the interests of justice. I am protesting because if I care about justice and liberation for all people, then I have to show up.”

“Due to military-like response by police to peaceful protest. And now literally military response.”

“There are millions of Chauvins in the so many police forces, turn them in. There are a million Amy Coopers in everyday corporate life. ... We protest being tired for having this target on our backs everyday, just for being BLACK. Tired that all the good white people, our friends, co-workers won't stand up. Tired. That's why we protest.” *Jacqueline*

It's my only way of getting attention to the societal devastation caused by evictions, exploitative pay, and an inability to have healthcare or a comfortable retirement.” *Jason*

“Because our work is unfinished, now more than ever. We are responsible for making our society just. No one else. By any means necessary, because we've already seen again and again that there is no alternative to direct action in the streets. Stop murdering Black people!!!”

“My reasoning is that it will be me next with the knee on the neck, or someone I love, with no recourse or remedy. What happened to the police internalizing their own motto: to protect and serve? When the entire population has been pushed to the brink with the lockdown ... and lack of factual information, leadership's only answer is do less.” *Dana*

“BLACK LIVES MATTER” *Bianca*

“This is about ALL injustices. The Black innocent lives that are lost time and time again at the hands of police. Yet they unjustly get to walk away with their hands clean. Trump being in office and getting to stay in office is an injustice to the entire U.S. and we all know why. The rich getting richer off the poor, getting first access to everything, including Covid testing and treatment, is an injustice. Greedy corporations preying on innocent lives. THIS IS ABOUT ALL INJUSTICES.”

“It could be my father, my brother, my uncle, my cousin, my friend, It makes me angry.” *Victoria*

“In every city, there's a George Floyd.” *Michael*

“I'm speaking for everybody, all my kinfolk, all my brothers and sisters who've gotten beaten up by police I don't condone the violence ... but at the end of the day, no 14-year-old should be beat up by police.”

"If we don't fight for change we're not going to get it" *Douglas*

"I took six rubber bullets, but do you know what didn't happen to me? No one kneeled on my neck." *Elizabeth*

"We've been through Jamar Clark, we've been through Philando Castile, and there was no justice whatsoever. We're tired of it, we are very tired. My son, he's 16 and six feet tall, and I don't want him to be taken as somebody bad because he's a bigger Black man." *Ashley*

"On one hand, it's very scary, because I know a lot of really messed up stuff is happening, people are being hurt, property is being destroyed. But at the same time, something else is on the horizon." *Chad*

"I'd never been affected by another one like this. I watched a man die, that's why. I watched a man die." *Erika*

"I felt like I had no excuse but to be a part of it. I have nephews. I have the next generation that's looking up to me as a role model." *Rashaad*

"What hit me about this in particular is how incredibly blatant it was, like how clear and how incredibly unnecessary and completely undefendable it was." *Damarra*

"I've never seen nothing like that before. Ever. Ever." *Kennetta*