



Island City Expresses its Outrage

Stella Madsen

Last week, thousands of people unified in protests across the world calling for change in police departments across the United States after George Floyd, a Black man, was murdered by Derek Chauvin, a White police officer, in Minneapolis on May 25. Witnesses recorded Chauvin kneeling directly on Floyd's neck during his arrest for allegedly using a counterfeit \$20 bill.

The youth led many protests around the country. Here in Alameda, hundreds of people peacefully marched on June 3, led by the Youth Activists of Alameda, an organization created

by Encinal High students Vinny Camarillo and Randell Rubio with many other students. On June 5, Amaya Edwards and Rachel Wellman, two young women from Alameda, and 30 other organizers led a crowd of young people in a protest for Black lives.

"It enrages me that [police brutality] is still happening for decades already," said Camarillo. "I couldn't be silent anymore. I couldn't allow myself not to do anything."

While many see Alameda as a small, quaint Bay Area suburb, separated from the traffic and urban chaos by a stream of estuary water, racism still plagues

"I couldn't be silent anymore. I couldn't allow myself not to do anything."

— Protest Organizer
Vinny Camarillo

the city just as it does anywhere else. On June 5, the Alameda Police Department released body-camera footage that shows officers arresting a Black man, Mali Watkins, on May 23, "for dancing." (See story below.)

Though Watkins was temporarily detained on May 23, his neighbors have since shown him acts of kindness and support to help him feel safe.

Camarillo hopes that the recent youth-led protests will encourage "action taken by our local government to change the way cops treat people of color, as well as not ignore the way they are treated."

Speakers at the protests called upon all White people in Alameda to uplift and listen to the young, powerful Black voices all around them.

"Our city is a predominately White city," said Camarillo. "People here are privileged and can use their privilege as an advantage to Black lives as well as other minorities."

The most effective thing all adults can do is vote, explained a speaker at Friday's protest. "Use your voice to elect those who will listen to the people and give us the change we desperately need." One helpful organization for this is Black Futures Lab, which works to hold elected officials accountable to communities and make Black voices powerful in politics.



The Youth Activists of Alameda said that the next step in their plan is to "continue to inform people of injustices in the world, inform them of what is happening in the world, and in our community. Different ways they can help and spread to others would also be included." They encourage everyone on the Island to contribute to the cause.

"We as a community need to stand up against all forms of racism," said Camarillo. "What's going on? Why is this still happening in our generation? The youth are our only hope and listening to them is an absolute benefit to everyone. As a community, we must come together."

Stella Madsen is a freshman journalist at Encinal High School.

Alamedans kneel in remembrance of George Floyd and in solidarity with the actions of former San Francisco 49er Colin Kaepernick.

Photos above left and below by Maurice Ramirez

Among the many inspiring speakers at Alameda's protest June 3, were Alameda High School student Raquel Williams, (above right); Julian Christobal, left, and Robbie Wilson right (in photo at right).



Mayor Chimes In

Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft

Calling you in, Alameda. Our local newspapers have published my weekly messages during the COVID-19 pandemic, to help keep residents informed about rapidly evolving developments regarding this pub-

lic health crisis. Now, in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, an equally urgent crisis has emerged in our city following the release of video footage of a Black resident being detained and arrested by police

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Arrest Raises Questions for APD

John Berg

About 7:45 a.m., on Saturday, May 23, an anonymous caller to the Alameda Police Department (APD) non-emergency number reported a man walking and "dancing" in the street in the 2000 block of Central Avenue. The caller indicated the subject may be mentally ill or under the influence.

Based on body-camera video released last Friday, June 6, officers responded to the call and approached the subject, who identified himself as an Alameda resident and told officers he was exercising across the street from his home. When the resident tried to walk away the officers physically detained the unarmed resident, identified as Mali

Watkins, 44. The incident quickly escalated into Watkins' arrest. Five police officers took the handcuffed Watkins to the pavement.

A video of the incident recorded by a camera on a home near where the incident took place was posted to social media and has resulted in an outcry from Alameda residents who found the video disturbing and are questioning the use of force.

APD released a statement on its Facebook page, which said, "At this time we can confirm that the individual in the video (Watkins) was not struck, pushed, slammed or hit." The statement and comments made by Facebook users were taken down after the neighborhood video was posted.

APD's log records the call as an emergency and states that Watkins was arrested for resisting the police. Of concern are the apparent inconsistencies between the video, the police dispatch recording, the APD statement and the dispatch log.

City Manager Eric Levitt released a statement on the City of Alameda's website on Thursday, June 5, announcing an independent investigation into the matter. He also expedited the release of the police dispatch recordings and body-camera footage from officers involved in the incident.

Vice Mayor John Knox White hosted a Town Hall Meeting via Zoom Video Conferencing on

Sunday, June 7, attended by 500 residents, the maximum permitted by the platform. The meeting was also broadcast on Facebook. Public sentiment ranged from abhorrence, to disappointment, to determination to see that APD policies undergo substantial change.

The Alameda Sun will follow up on this story and report further developments.

John Berg writes for the Alameda Sun on assignment. Contact him at editor@alamedasun.com.

Video still from residential security camera

Until this footage was released, APD claimed Watkins wasn't "struck, pushed, slammed or hit."



TOWARD A MORE EQUITABLE SOCIETY

Soon after this paper was founded, *Nightline*, a daily television news program hosted by Ted Koppel opened the phone lines to the nation one spring night in 2003 and asked the question, "What is the most racist city in America?" One caller offered: "Alameda, California."

Much of the Alameda Sun staff was new to town and shocked into awareness. We organized a public forum with help from College of Alameda and the Alameda Multicultural Community Center. Since that day, we have tried to make our publication a fair voice for every Alamedan to the extent of reversing that moniker. Our hope is, given what we have seen in recent days, that somewhere else now holds that title, but Alameda still has a long way to go.

We had to learn by making some embarrassing mistakes but our aim was always to admit errors and move forward inclusively. We never forgot that day in 2003.

In the pattern we set soon after the Sun's birth, we are looking to host a forum for all Alamedans to express their viewpoints on police and race soon.

— Eric J. Kos
Dennis Evanovsky &
Staff, Alameda Sun

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June 13	5:47	20:32
June 14	5:47	20:32
June 15	5:47	20:32
June 16	5:47	20:33
June 17	5:47	20:33



Class of 2020 Issue Coming Next Week

Photo by Maurice Ramirez

Encinal High School's 2020 class valedictorian Zander Lack, who will attend Stanford in the fall, poses for a photo at the class graduation celebration at Alameda Theater. The Alameda Sun aims to publish the entire list of grads next week and mail a copy to everyone in town — the most Suns ever printed at one time, 37,000. To advertise or subscribe call (510) 263-1824 or see alamedasun.com.

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