

TimesOC

SUNDAY, JUNE 7, 2020 /// Times Community News publication serving Orange County /// timesoc.com



PROTEST SPIRIT GROWING IN O.C.



On May 26, in response to the death of George Floyd while in the custody of four Minneapolis police officers, protests erupted in cities across America, including Los Angeles. Many of these events initially involved looting, as well as violence from both protesters and reportedly members of law enforcement.

But many locals weren't expecting these protests to pop up in Orange County, which can feel like a bubble. When they did, some were scared. Business owners boarded up their stores. But for the most part, the O.C. protests have been peaceful. Many are organized by youth, and collectively, they've attracted thousands who are angry about police brutality toward black lives and want police reform.

Inside, pages 2-5 >>

KHALIL MCLEOD, right, speaks into a megaphone outside City Hall on Wednesday.

Photos by Ben Brazil, Kevin Chang, Don Leach, Raul Roa, Scott Smeltzer and Ada Tseng

IRVINE

A Surf City Favorite Since 1961

MANY 5 POINTS PLAZA STORES AND RESTAURANTS HAVE REOPENED.

5 POINTS CLEANERS • AFFINITY & CO. JEWELERS • AT&T • BANK OF AMERICA • BIG 5 SPORTING GOODS • CHICO'S • DUCK DONUTS
GAP • GLOBAL VISION OPTOMETRY • HASHIGO SUSHI • JAVA BAKERY CAFÉ • KAHOTS PET STORE • LEMON THAI CUISINE
MARIO'S MEXICAN FOOD & CANTINA • OMAHA STEAKS • PHENIX SALON SUITES • SALON CHAMPAGNE • TILLY'S • TITANIUM TICKETS
TRADER JOE'S • THE UPS STORE • WORLD OF EARTH FOOTWEAR • XA CAFE • YOGURTLAND • ZUMIEZ



5 POINTS PLAZA

MAIN @ BEACH BLVD • HUNTINGTON BEACH • 5POINTSPLAZA.COM

FREE, EASY PARKING • COMMUNITY FOCUSED



ANAHEIM

Despite fears, protesters are mostly peaceful

BY BEN BRAZIL

Despite fears of rioting and violence, thousands of protesters marched largely peacefully through Anaheim Monday evening to protest the death of George Floyd.

Protesters gathered on the edge of La Palma Park at 4 p.m. and listened to community leaders of all ages as they demanded justice for Floyd and all those who have been unjustly killed by police.

"There's a lot of people hoping you will lose your sanity," said one speaker, promoting a peaceful march. "We are here to prove them wrong."

At one point, protesters all knelt and raised their fists in solidarity.

Shea Quarles, 22, of Fullerton said she was physically sick when she watched the video of Floyd's death. But, she said, the protest should be peaceful.

"We can't fight hatred with hatred," Quarles said. Protesters held signs that read, "Good cops that don't turn in bad cops are not good cops" and "Black is not a crime." They chanted, "[Expletive] Donald Trump."

As protesters marched toward City Hall through the street, supporters followed closely behind, blasting music from their cars. Others shouted support from their porches. "Black Lives Matter" signs were in the window sills of many homes.

"When people get slain, people will take to the streets," said Nick Las, 25.

Las, who's black, said Floyd's death hit close to home. "It could have been me, my little brother, my father ..." he said.

Las said he wants to be a police officer. He said he hopes to be a part of the systemic change that needs to happen in law enforcement.

Police maintained a heavy presence throughout the event, and some tension developed when protesters hit a police roadblock at Broadway and Harbor Boulevard.

Protesters chanted as they walked, and some periodically set off fireworks.

Jocelyn Cunningham, 28, of Anaheim said the march was the first one she's ever taken part in. Cunningham said she was disgusted by the video of Floyd's death. She took part in the march to show that the culture of law enforcement needs to change.

"This is my city," Cunningham said. "We need to move forward in serving justice when people are killed by police."

The protesters gathered at the foot of City Hall and listened to impassioned speakers as police stood in a line across the street in riot gear.

Protesters peacefully returned to the park, and many continued marching.

Juan Hernandez, 31, co-owner of Anchor Muffler stood outside of his business as protesters walked by. He was grateful that the protest didn't turn into a riot.

"We want justice too, but we have to protect our business," Hernandez said.

Anaheim declared an unlawful assembly shortly after 7 p.m. as some protesters splintered off into smaller groups and began throwing fireworks at police. The city had issued a curfew of 6 p.m. earlier in the afternoon.

About 20 people were arrested by the end of the night, including a group that attempted to loot a store, according to Anaheim police.

benjamin.brazil@latimes.com
Twitter: @benbrazil



Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATORS take a knee at Harbor Boulevard and Broadway at Monday's protest in Anaheim.



OFFICERS STAND their ground as peaceful protesters block the intersection at Harbor Boulevard and Broadway.



A NEIGHBOR watches protesters march by on Harbor Boulevard during the protest for George Floyd in Anaheim.



DEMONSTRATORS HOLD signs while marching down Harbor Boulevard during the protest for George Floyd.



THE MARCH DOWN Harbor Boulevard during Monday's protest in Anaheim includes a young man riding a bicycle.

COSTA MESA

PROTESTERS DEFY CURFEW ON MONDAY, MEET POLICE PRESENCE OUTSIDE SOUTH COAST PLAZA

BY BEN BRAZIL AND SARA CARDINE

A protest nearly descended into violence on Monday night after a series of tense standoffs between police and protesters outside South Coast Plaza in Costa Mesa.

Protesters originally met at the corner of Bear Street and Sunflower Avenue across from South Coast Plaza at about 8 p.m. to demonstrate against racism and Minneapolis police officers' involvement in the May 25 death of George Floyd, an unarmed black man who was under arrest.

The protesters gathered in defiance of a second overnight curfew put in place by city officials after looting and rioting shook neighboring Huntington Beach and Santa Ana over the weekend.

Protesters chanted, "Hands up, don't shoot!" and held signs like "Help I can't breathe" and "No one is free until all of us are free."

The protest began peacefully, with many stating they hoped for a protest devoid of violence. Some hoped to provoke solidarity with police.

"It's not us against cops, it's us against racists," said Adam Robinson, 21, of Costa Mesa.

By 9 p.m., roughly 100 protesters had gathered onsite, and the police presence had swelled. Officers in riot gear waited in the mall parking lot next to floodlights about 100 yards away from the crowd, which soon moved across the street and stood about 10 feet from the officers, chanting and beckoning



A SERIES of standoffs between protesters and police took place at a rally at South Coast Plaza in Costa Mesa Monday night.

them to "take a knee."

Some in the crowd argued with others about that moment of symbolism, meant to unify the protesters with the police. One of the officers in charge said he would possibly take a knee or shake the hand of one of the protesters if they came to an agreement and would disburse afterward.

One protester against the symbolic moment yelled, "Stop licking boots!" Another protester said, "Will it bring George back?"

At one point, a man tried to sneak past the police line onto the mall parking lot, but he was detained by police. That was the night's only arrest.

Many who gathered to protest said they believed an original posting for the event on social media was meant to incite violence

and wasn't posted in good faith by protesters. Some believed antagonists of the movement had posted the original event.

Rashaan Burns, 21, of Costa Mesa, said the fact that the original posting scheduled the protest at South Coast Plaza was conspicuous because it would be an ideal area for looters.

But Burns and many of the others who showed up decided they would turn what may have been a fake event aimed at promoting violence into a peaceful protest.

"I just want peace," Burns said.

Burns, who tried to set up the unifying moment with police, said he was disappointed that the group could not come to a consensus. He was hoping for a symbolic moment be-

tween the police and protesters.

"Moments like those inspire other cops to step forward and be better," he said.

The protesters eventually disengaged from the standoff at the corner of South Coast Drive and walked down to the usually busy intersection of Bristol Street and Sunflower, where there was another standoff with police.

Then the group walked toward Alton Parkway and Bristol and there was another momentary standoff. After a few tense moments, they headed back.

By 11 p.m., there were about 60 people at the corner of Sunflower and Bristol.

A police helicopter circled and flashed its lights as police closed in and

wouldn't let the protesters leave the area for a period. While the helicopter told protesters to return to their cars, some officers wouldn't let protesters back to their vehicles. As one protester walked back to where he said his vehicle was, an officer pointed a rubber bullet gun at him as he was ordered to turn around.

The protest dissipated at 11:30 p.m.

"We are thankful for the peaceful demonstration that occurred last night in our city and the support we had from the community, city and local law enforcement agencies," said Costa Mesa Police Department Chief Bryan Glass, who had the Santa Ana Police Department and the Orange County Sheriff's Department as backup.

The police department

said the curfew has been "suspended while CMPD monitors for any potential activity."

Costa Mesa Mayor Katrina Foley said on Tuesday that she was pleased with how the city's police department handled demonstrators, far calmer and fewer in number than what officials had anticipated after hearing social media posts that referred to riots and looting.

She described the scene, which she observed remotely, as nonviolent and respectful.

"Everyone was prepared, and we did a good job," Foley said. "Law enforcement personally exercised restraint and let people who wanted to protest do so peacefully and respectfully. There was a strong effort to deter any agitators."

City Manager Lori Ann Farrell Harrison declared a local state of emergency when calling for the curfews on Sunday and Monday. An announcement on the city's website says the curfew was suspended at 5:30 a.m. Tuesday.

"There are still ongoing events happening throughout the county this week, so we're going to stay at the ready and continue to have dialogue with the community groups who really care about social justice issues," Foley said.

Costa Mesa had planned to conduct unconscious bias training for police officers and City Hall employees earlier this year, as part of a routine training, but the program was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Twitter: @TimesOCofficial



It's time to put your health first.

The real risk to your health is avoiding care when you need it. Our nationally recognized physicians are ready to treat you safely and effectively, the way only Hoag can.

**hoag** always hereSM

#OCtogether

 @hoaghealth

 @hoagofficial

 @hoaghealth

GARDEN GROVE



Photos by Kevin Chang | Staff Photographer

BLACK LIVES MATTER supporters gather at Village Green Park in Garden Grove. The Police Department estimates the Wednesday march attracted between 3,000 and 4,000 people.

March organized by teens draws thousands

BY ADA TSENG

Last August, local high school students came together to form the nonprofit organization Meep Shows, an acronym for “More Empowering Events Please.”

The group of 12 is composed of youth from Garden Grove to Irvine to Long Beach. As people of color and those who identify as LGBTQ, they bonded over the racism and homophobia they encountered growing up in Orange County.

In November, they hosted their first event, an Abolish ICE music festival, and raised \$4,000 for Border Kindness, a humanitarian aid organization that helps asylum seekers and refugees.

Less than a year later, in the aftermath of the unjust death of George Floyd at the hand of Minneapolis police, they hosted a protest in Santa Ana on Sunday that attracted hundreds, and a second one in Garden Grove on Wednesday that the Garden Grove Police Department estimates attracted between 3,000 and 4,000 people.

“There was so much misinformation going around,” said Meep’s Nicole Nguyen, referring to the rumors prior to the event that the protests were being planned by a terrorist organization.

Nguyen will graduate



PROTESTERS KNEEL in front of Westminister police officers in an intersection at the Garden Grove Civic Center.

from Garden Grove High School next week. So will Heavyn Agu, her classmate who is the president of the school’s Black Student Union, that Meep asked to help lead Wednesday’s march.

They’re local teenagers who understand that Garden Grove, the fifth-largest city in O.C., is diverse (40% white, 40% Asian, 39% Latino and 1% black) and politically divided (approximately 37% registered Democrats and 30% Republicans). As protests spread across then nation, they still saw “Blue Lives Matters” banners, countering the Black Lives Matter movement, hanging on buildings around their city.

They learned from the Santa Ana protest, Nguyen explained, where there

were clashes with police before curfew approached, so they moved their original 4 p.m. start time to 3:30 p.m. and put out a notice on social media encouraging protesters to leave by 5:30 p.m. to avoid the 6 p.m. curfew.

As the protest began, Agu told the crowd that if anyone had plans to bring violence or loot local businesses, they should leave.

“That is not our message,” she said. “That’s not the way that we’re trying to get our point across.”

Lt. Carl Whitney of the Garden Grove Police Department confirmed there were no arrests or injuries reported and explained that the call for the crowd to disperse as the curfew approached was because cars were getting stuck at inter-



PROTESTERS SHOW their support for Black Lives Matter as they cruise south along Euclid Street in Garden Grove.

sections. He said the organizers did a good job with their peaceful protest, and he appreciated that they cleaned up all the trash after the protest was over.

The Garden Grove Black Lives Matter protest began at the Village Green Park in front of the iconic “Tower on the Green” clock tower. Agu practiced the chants with the crowd, before protesters did a 4-mile loop down Euclid Street, Garden Grove Boulevard, Brookhurst Street and Chapman Avenue.

Yogi Mapaderun is a Nigerian American from New York, who moved to Garden Grove about a year ago to be closer to his family.

“I’ll never forget when I got arrested at 9 years old in front of my mom’s because I had a toy gun in my

pocket,” he said. “No [expletive]. So I’m here for George Floyd, because of what they did to him. It’s [expletive]-ed up, man. How’re you gonna let that man die right in front of your face? Y’all didn’t hear that man scream more than seven times? ‘I can’t breathe.’”

Mapaderun’s stepbrother Mehr Khaliq, who is half black, is from Garden Grove.

“Growing up here, it’s been a lot of subtle things from everywhere around me,” said Khaliq, who is studying at Cal State Fullerton.

“Most people are still subconsciously racist. They have things in the back of their mind, where, like, they’ll follow you around a store. There’s just certain

small things that they do and how they react.”

This is his second protest. He went to the Anaheim protest on Monday.

“You see name after name after name [of black people killed by police] every week and sometimes you just get numb to it,” he said. “But this was just so in-my-face, and it felt like it was everyone who was involved, not just Black Lives Matter [activists] ... It’s not ‘All lives matter’ until black lives matter. When people say ‘All lives matter,’ it’s disrespectful.”

It was Bernnuel Diaz’s his fourth protest this week, after attending others in Los Angeles, Santa Ana and Anaheim.

Diaz grew up in Santa Ana and lives in Westminster, and he came with his friend Tecuani Tllali from Anaheim to represent the O.C. chapter of the National Brown Berets.

The group, started in the 1960s, was formed to protest against social injustice against the Chicano community.

“I’m here to stand in solidarity with my African brothers and sisters against police brutality,” Diaz said.

Catherine Ji, an elementary school teacher from Irvine, dropped off her teenage daughter with her mother, who lives in Gar-

See *March*, page R6

IRVINE

‘I haven’t seen anything like this in my 32 years’

BY BEN BRAZIL

As she stood in front of hundreds of protesters at the foot of the Irvine Civic Center on Wednesday evening, Cessa Heard-Johnson raised the bullhorn to her lips and urged the crowd to play a role in the national movement to reform the country’s justice system.

“Don’t look for somebody to do something, you do something,” she said.

One by one, black community members took turns sharing their stories, each revealing pain, trauma and injustice.

The hundreds of protesters cheered in unison, chanted together and some

cried together.

Many of the protesters who attended the demonstration against the death of George Floyd were in awe that a protest like this could happen in conservative Irvine. Less than 2% of the city’s population is black and the city’s sheltered nature is commonly referred to as the “Irvine Bubble.”

Moneka Broughton, who went to Irvine High School, said a protest like this would never have happened in Irvine when she was in school in the mid-2000s.

“I haven’t seen anything like this in my 32 years,” Broughton said of the national movement.

The protest was organized by Ava Hojreh, 19, Ida Nariman, 18, and Alizah Gomez, 18. The three women used an Instagram account, @ocforblacklives, to spread the word about the protest.

The women organized the demonstration in Irvine to breach the bubble and educate communities that don’t often have to reckon with injustice. They chose to have a sit-in with speakers to keep the event peaceful.

Irvine police confirmed that there were no arrests at the protest. Unlike other cities, Irvine did not set a curfew.

“We wanted to have a



HUNDREDS attend a protest for the death of George Floyd outside Irvine City Hall on Wednesday.

Photo by Ben Brazil

productive and educational event,” Hojreh said.

The police presence was fairly minimal compared to protests in Anaheim, Costa Mesa, Huntington Beach and Santa Ana earlier in the week.

Police were blocking the Civic Center parking lot and weren’t near protesters.

Broughton said she heard constant racist comments while going to school in Irvine.

“We had to take it,” she said. “They thought it was funny.”

Floyd’s death and other police killings of black citizens is very personal for Broughton, whose cousin was killed by a police officer.

She said the voice of the people is growing, and areas like Irvine that are usually shielded from social controversy are starting to play a role in a decades-long social movement to reform unjust law enforcement practices.

“It’s not easy to ignore it now,” she said. “When it’s across the street from your house, you start listening.”

The floor was opened up to any black person at the

protest.

Ty Bailey said his first reaction when he watched the video of Floyd’s killing was, “Not again.”

Patrick George Frierson told the crowd to not jump on the movement temporarily.

“Be a part of the change,” he said.

This was one of several protests that have been held outside Irvine City Hall this week. Irvine Mayor Christina Shea has been commenting about the protests for several days on her Facebook page, at times criticizing protesters and also showing support for the city’s Police Department.

Shea posted a comment Thursday morning, which has since been deleted, to her Facebook page about the Wednesday protest. She included a response to those calling for a reduction in police spending.

“I will continue to support our law enforcement in Irvine with the top dollars we expend to keep us safe,” Shea said.

“I won’t be diminishing their budget. If that isn’t your interest, perhaps living

in another community that hosts different values, a less safe environment would best suit your lifestyle.

“We are a diverse community with over 150 languages and my goal is to continue the course ... keep us safe and show the tolerance, protection and love our residents deserve. ... what my goals are and my values is a political agenda that is transparent and your right.”

A few days prior, Shea referred to Floyd’s death as “senseless,” but said, “I also want and need to say, I will not allow my city to become a location for an expression of anger and hate against my residents and my stellar police force, who I stand behind 100%.”

Shea also said, “I have instructed my chief to take whatever measures are appropriate to ensure a safe demonstration.”

The Irvine Police Department thanked the protesters on its Twitter account for “peacefully expressing” their views at the demonstration.

benjamin.brazil@latimes.com
Twitter: @benbrazil

TimesOC

A Times Community News publication serving Orange County

CONTACT US

Ada Tseng
Entertainment Editor
(714) 966-4635
ada.tseng@latimes.com

Raymond Arroyo
Advertising Director
(714) 966-4608
ray.arroyo@latimes.com

Online
timesoc.com
Social Media
@timesocofficial

Address

10540 Talbert Ave.,
Suite 300 West,
Fountain Valley, CA 92708

Business Office

(714) 966-4600

Newsroom

(714) 966-4699

Email

dailypilot@latimes.com

TCN Classifieds

800-234-4444

TCN Legal Phone

888-881-6181

TCN Legal Email

LALegal@tribune.com

COMPANY INFO

TimesOC is published Sundays by Times Community News, a division of the Los Angeles Times. Subscriptions are available only by subscribing to The Times, Orange County.

© 2020 Times Community News. All rights reserved.



Photo by Vera Castaneda

MEYAH RIGGINS holds a poster reading "Black Lives Matter" at a Laguna Niguel protest calling for an end to police violence.



Raul Roa | Staff Photographer

PROTESTERS ARRIVE at Greenfield Avenue and Crown Valley Parkway in Laguna Niguel to support Black Lives Matter on Wednesday.



Raul Roa | Staff Photographer

SOPHIE RUDOLPH, 18 of Mission Viejo, center crossing the street, offers her support at the Laguna Niguel protest on Wednesday.

LAGUNA NIGUEL

Protests grow to include south Orange County

BY VERA CASTANEDA

After recently protesting in Washington D.C., Nicole Oveisi couldn't find any local demonstrations when she came home to Laguna Niguel. She planned on making a sign in support of the Black Lives Matter movement and taking to the suburbs anyway.

"O.C. is kind of a bubble," said Oveisi, an Iranian American student pursuing a graduate degree at Georgetown University. "I don't want people in southern Orange County to think that this stuff doesn't affect them. It does and that's what we're here to show. We all have to stand up for this."

Her friend, who gave only her first name, Sydney, said she couldn't let her go alone.

Since Monday, the two 26-year-olds have stood on the corner of Greenfield Drive and Crown Valley Parkway — a busy intersection bringing in Ralph's grocery shoppers and long drive-through lines at Chick-fil-A. Little by little, the sounds of supportive car horns drew out a handful of nearby residents to join them.

By Wednesday afternoon, the peaceful Laguna Niguel demonstration peaked at about 50 people, from toddlers to 74-year-olds.

The death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, a black man who died in handcuffs after being suffocated under the knee of a white police officer, moved residents to protest. Demonstrations calling for an end to police brutality against black people started brewing in north Orange County over the weekend and trickled down to the county's south suburbs — some of which rank as the state's most conservative areas.

Oveisi posted a video on Twitter of a man in a white BMW yelling racist obscenities at them, while a Trump-supporting flag poked through the sunroof on Monday. Later, he was identified as a well-known resident, nicknamed Racist Randy by protesters.

"He was exposed for being a white supremacist and people are upset," Sydney said. "Now, they're coming down and supporting us and saying that they've seen the video everywhere."

There was another driver in a Mercedes-Benz who threatened to beat protesters on Wednesday, but Sydney said people have been more reluctant to yell profanities since the group grew larger.

There were plenty of people who rolled their windows down to express their appreciation. Drivers wiped tears, blew kisses, honked horns and raised their



Raul Roa | Staff Photographer

A WOMAN in a car stopped at the light first cheered, then took photos with her cellphone before becoming emotional when she saw protesters at the corner of Greenfield Avenue and Crown Valley Parkway supporting the Black Lives Matter movement in Laguna Niguel on Wednesday.

fists in support.

Thirteen-year-old Aydan Nguyen held a sign that read, "Silence is complicity." His parents said they brought him and his 15-year-old brother to the protest as a teaching moment.

"I wanted to show my kids the value of protesting peacefully and that we don't live in such a great neighborhood," said Aydan's dad. "There are a lot of racist people here but they didn't show themselves as much as now. They feel empowered."

Meyah Riggins, 22, ended her shift at a nearby Starbucks to stop by the demonstration for the second day in a row. She hopes people who usually wouldn't think twice about George Floyd see the demonstration and educate themselves about racial injustices.

"I've been looking for smaller protests and just to add a little bit of color to the sidewalk and incite other people to make moves," Riggins said.

Organizers plan on demonstrating at the same location throughout the week.

On the same day, another Laguna Niguel protest took place in Bear Brand Park with protesters demanding police reform.

Almost 6 miles south, hundreds took the streets of San Juan Capistrano to march. Activists gathered in Historic Town Center Park and took turns on the megaphone during the last segment of the protest.

"If you really want to change your status, your situation, your world — Nov. 2 is right around the corner," said a local elementary school teacher to the crowd. "If you want change, this is the beginning not the end. A vote is going to be more powerful than any bullet."

One of the demonstrators, Dwight Williams Jr., encouraged the crowd to speak up.

"Understand what we are fighting for right now — we have a lot of people watching and this is not a time to be silent," he said.

Another speaker urged the crowd to "bring the same energy you have here home. If your parents say some racist [comments], you have to call them out on it."

The protest was organized by a small group of young residents. Keyby Lopez, 22, and his cousin Angeles Loya, 34, planned the protest on Tuesday.

"It was very last-minute, and we are so happy with the turnout," Lopez said. "It goes to show when [expletive] goes down we have each others' back."

Loya described San Juan as a gentrified area dealing with police brutality that goes unreported.

"It's very conflicting because you have this small town in the middle of a bunch of rich cities," Loya said. "You have so much gentrification, but then you have this little barrio and the only reason people are surviving is because they got 20 people to a house."

Some businesses boarded up windows, and there was a heavy presence of law enforcement officers. The O.C. Sheriff's office said Thursday morning that there were no arrests or injuries reported in both Laguna Niguel and San Juan Capistrano protests.

Before the crowd dispersed around 7 p.m., they played music and stragglers talked about what protests they planned on attending throughout the week.

vera.castaneda@latimes.com
Twitter: @vera_fyd

YORBA LINDA

'More than just politics, it's about decent humane treatment'

BY ADA TSENG

Biola Macaulay, 26, said she teared up a little bit when she walked up to Tuesday's Yorba Linda protest against the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, which started on Main Street and ended around the fountain of the pristine Yorba Linda Town Center, which just opened last year.

The protest started at 4 p.m. with about 500 people lining the corner of Main Street and Imperial Highway, but a couple of hundred protesters were still gathered around the fountain a couple of hours later. It was a multi-generational and multicultural crowd.

After moments of silence, chanting and taking knees, the organizers allowed anyone who wanted to speak to take their turn at the microphone.

"I was pleasantly surprised to see how many people showed up today," said Macaulay, who is a lawyer. "I grew up in Yorba Linda, and I honestly did not think that this many people cared about black people or us dying. Which is really sad to say, but that has honestly been my experience growing up here."

At that moment, a truck with two Trump banners circled the plaza to taunt the protesters, who threw up their middle fingers and screamed "Go the [expletive] home" and "Get out of your [expletive] car, you coward."

"People like that is what I've grown up with," said Macaulay, gesturing at the men driving by. "That's why I didn't expect to see this."

A 2018 Sacramento Bee study rated Yorba Linda as the most conservative large city in California, based on



Ada Tseng

AFTER MARCHING from Yorba Linda's Main Street, protesters gather around the fountain in the Yorba Linda Town Center to share stories about their experiences as people of color in their city.

the number of voters registered with conservative parties. It's the home of Richard Nixon and his presidential library. The population is about 60% white and 1.3% African American.

The day before, Caleigh Cobb, 21, who is white and was born and raised in Yorba Linda, heard there were six people protesting on Yorba Linda's Main Street. Cobb, who just graduated from Arizona State University, thought, "We can do better than that."

She and her friend, Malia Green, who is black and Latina and from Placentia, organized it together. They are graduates of El Dorado High School, so they spread the word through their friends and on social media.

She said she would have been happy with 50 protesters. She was floored by the turnout.

It wasn't the typical place for a protest. The backdrop included stores like Club Pilates, Lash Lounge and Clean Juice. As one protester listed the names of the black men who have died from police brutality, a Michael Bubl  song happened to play over the pla-

za's speakers.

Business owners on Main Street kept watch in front of their stores in case there was any trouble. Several helicopters circled the area, and the police patrolled, but the O.C. Sheriff's office confirmed on Wednesday that although there was verbal sparring with a few counter-protesters, there were no arrests or injuries reported.

"It's a privilege for us to be able to have a peaceful protest here," Cobb said.

She arrived early to try and assure business owners of their good intentions. She was in contact with the Sheriff's office and Mayor Tara Campbell.

"I really just wanted to let people speak," she said. "This is a very rich, majority-white community, and it's easy to live in a bubble. I wanted to give a voice to people of color in the area to share their experiences and say, 'This happened here. This isn't something that happened somewhere else. This happened to me here.'"

Bobby Srivastav of Yorba Linda was moved by a black mother who spoke about how scared she is for her

children.

He, like many in the crowd, was surprised to hear there would be a protest in Yorba Linda.

He saw the crowd while driving home from work and wanted to bring his son and niece.

Srivastav is the fourth-generation owner of Bobby's English Tack, a provider of bridles and halters for equestrians that was started in 1880 by his great-grandfather in India. His great-grandfather was the official supplier for the horses for the British government when it held rule over India, he explained, and now the family business is based in Brea.

He came to the U.S. from India when he was 3 and moved to Brea when he was in fifth grade. He said he faced racism growing up in the area.

"It's gotten a lot better," he said, "but what happened to George Floyd is unbelievably sickening, and this needs to change ... It's what you teach your kids at the end of the day. If people are going to teach hate, the kids are going to learn hate until they figure it out for

themselves or sometimes they don't figure it out at all.

"And I think in this day and time, it's more fear," he continued. "People are more afraid, that's why they hate because they can't understand and have an open mind."

Gisela and Arin Kelman, from Yorba Linda, brought their young daughters, who sat on top of their shoulders, holding signs. They had made four of them: "Black Lives Matter," "Silence is Violence," "Police the police" and "Racism is the Real Pandemic."

Gisela Kelman hoped for a peaceful protest.

"I went with my mother instinct and thought, we will go and see how it is, do what we need to do, support the cause, and if we don't think it's safe enough, then we will go back home," she said.

She was happy to see that it was a safe space, with other children in attendance.

"They need to see it," Gisela Kelman said, referring to her children. "Because they need to take it to school with them and they need to take it to the park with them."

"It's to set an example for them that everyone should be treated equally," said Arin Kelman. "In the United States of America, we have the expression 'peace and justice for all,' and there isn't justice for all ... It's important for them to realize that and for them to carry forward the message that everyone should be treated equally."

While others were protesting, Placentia resident Jay Kim-Turner walked around handing people masks.

He just finished his first year at UC Berkeley but was

home early because of COVID-19. In April, he and seven of his friends, many of them from Valencia High School, started a GoFundMe called Masked Heroes Initiative, where they've raised \$1,355 so far in order to buy masks to donate to local hospitals.

Since the protests started last weekend, he's been bringing the masks to hand out at protests.

"Since George Floyd happened, social distancing has gone out the window," he said. "While it's everyone's right to protest, and I think it's necessary to demand justice, at the same time, we can't forget that coronavirus still exists. We need to still stay focused, so I'm just trying to make sure I do my part to make sure everyone protests just a little bit safer."

Kim-Turner's adopted father is African American, and he has a family member that he feels was given a severe jail sentence that did not fit the crime.

He said he was also surprised that there was a protest in Yorba Linda, but he thinks that "this is more than just politics. This is about decent humane treatment."

Macaulay and her friends decided to leave when they saw the cars with Trump banners driving by. They didn't want to risk being around just in case things got tense.

But before she left, she said, "Seeing this many people out here of all colors is really inspiring. There's obviously a lot that needs to be done, but the fact that people are willing to show up, I think is really telling and very beautiful."

ada.tseng@latimes.com
Twitter: @adatseng

CARAVAN DRIVES THROUGH SANTA ANA AIMING TO CLOSE THE CENSUS COUNT GAP

BY VERA CASTANEDA

A group of local businesses and organizations hitched their latest census efforts onto the caravan bandwagon on May 29.

Before a wave of protests took over city streets, a parade of school buses, cars and vans decorated with banners and balloons slowly drove through Santa Ana for nearly three hours to the tunes of reggaeton, cumbias and Selena classics. Santa Ana Unified, AltaMed Senior Care, the O.C. Food Bank and Suavecito Apparel were just a few of the participants.

Saul Viramontes, Orange County's head of Census 2020 special projects, and his team pivoted to phone banking and digital outreach once COVID-19 hit.

"After a month or so, we were thinking 'There's only so much social media outreach we can do,'" Viramontes said. "There's only so much digital outreach we can do. There's only so much phone banking that we can do. What else is out there? That's kind of where the caravan came from."



Raul Roa | Staff Photographer

THE COUNTY of Orange census campaign passed by in a 15-vehicle parade around Santa Ana on May 29. The two-hour motorcade promoted completing the census in areas of the city.

He pointed out certain areas have low broadband connectivity and even the biggest investment in social media and digital advertising wouldn't matter for those households.

With events and door-to-door canvassing out of the question, they decided to try something new in an effort to reach the hardest-

to count areas like Santa Ana.

As of this week, 61.3% of the Orange County population responded to the census according to Viramontes. He listed parts of Anaheim, Irvine and unincorporated areas as falling behind in response rates.

Yesenia Hernandez, Community Action Part-

nership of Orange County spokesperson, saw car parades for students start to spread locally and statewide. She helped plan the event and made sure the participants were specific organizations that have built community trust in Santa Ana.

One of the participating nonprofits, Latino Health

Access, was already reaching out to the neighborhood in alternative ways. The health organization equipped vans with loudspeakers and drove to food distribution centers and grocery stores to provide information about COVID-19.

Nancy Mejia, director of the nonprofit's community engagement, drove in the caravan and said "people were very supportive and excited. I think more than anything, the kids got excited to see something different in the past months of social distancing."

She added, "With inequities in our community around COVID-19 and civil unrest, I think we have been very intentional to make sure that our presence remains in those communities."

The caravan moved slowly and made many stops to have conversations with onlookers about the census.

"Many who are immigrants are still getting to know how the political systems work," Mejia said. "So our work has been providing information and

education."

It also involves reassuring non-citizens questions included in the census are safe to answer.

Viramontes heard some say they didn't get their mail-in census packet. Many non-English speakers didn't know that the census could be submitted online through 2020census.gov or over the phone by using lines catering to multiple languages.

The California Legislature invested \$187.2 million toward census outreach and distributed the money to counties and nonprofits statewide.

"It's important that the community gets counted because that is how the amount of resources coming from the federal government to cities are decided, like reduced lunch programs for kids," Mejia said.

"Public funding also means that we can demand how the police are funded, for instance. The more resources our community gets, the better."

vera.castaneda@latimes.com
Twitter: @vera_fyd

Valedictorian sends off class of 2020 with a message to give back

BY VERA CASTANEDA

Priscilla Arceo's face is plastered on banners hanging from city light poles across Santa Ana. She also made an appearance on a televised prime-time special celebrating high school graduates in early May.

Not too shabby for an 18-year-old student who is part of the generation whose high school years will be marked by words like "COVID-19," "virtual" and "protests 2020."

The banners are part of Santa Ana Unified School District's alternative celebrations for the class of 2020. Billboards and 170 street pole banners were installed across the city in addition to lawn signs on student homes and local businesses.

When Arceo was chosen to give a speech at her school's virtual commencement as Santa Ana High School's valedictorian, she immediately reached out to Sal Tinajero. He runs the school district's speech and debate program.

"He is known to be a pretty good speech coach," Arceo said.

Tinajero said he's sent hundreds of kids to college over the years through the



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

BANNERS CELEBRATING 2020 graduates are shown on light poles along Bristol Street in Santa Ana.

program, and one Santa Ana middle school student in the program is a two-time National Speech and Debate Assn. winner.

The Le Bron James Family Foundation and XQ Institute reached out to nine different coaches around

the country, including Tinajero, to have students audition nationwide for the "Graduate Together: American Honors the Class of 2020" special featuring a list of celebrities and noteworthy figures, including former President Barack

Obama.

He encouraged her to apply. About three days after the audition, she received a phone call letting her know she was chosen.

"She was in tears," Tinajero said. "Her family is very low-income. Mom only

speaks Spanish. She's taken on two to three jobs to help her daughter get ahead. Talk about validation."

In her speech, Arceo talked about being raised by a single mother.

"All that she did for me wasn't always seen or ap-

preciated by others," Arceo said in her speech. "That's my biggest motivator because when I'm successful and one day come back to help my community, her hard work will be for something bigger than the two of us."

Santa Ana Unified live-streamed virtual graduation videos for eight school campuses from May 26 to June 3 on cable, the district website, YouTube and Facebook. Santa Ana High School's ceremony received almost 7,000 Facebook views.

Arceo said traditional in-person graduation was a milestone she looked forward to during her entire academic life, especially as a first-generation student. But she's also understanding of the health crisis circumstances.

Her family threw her a surprise drive-through graduation. Family and friends honked and cheered as they rode cars through her street with balloons and posters.

Arceo picked up her diploma and yearbook from campus this week. Now she is UC Santa Barbara bound.

vera.castaneda@latimes.com
Twitter: @vera_fyd

Local medical and nursing school graduates prepare to enter the front lines during the pandemic

BY BEN BRAZIL

Medical school graduates are preparing to take their place on the front lines in the battle against COVID-19.

Richelle Roelandt Lu Homo, who recently graduated from the UC Irvine School of Medicine, said she is ready to begin working in a hospital despite anxieties posed by the pandemic.

"We are entering the world of medicine with greater responsibility," Lu Homo said. "That increased level of responsibility is scary but exciting because it means we are doing something right."

Andrew Bailey, one of the 24 graduates from Vanguard University's nursing pre-licensure program, said many of his fellow students are nervous about their schooling coming to an end.

"It's totally unprecedented being in nursing school and graduating, and a global pandemic hits," Bailey said. "Within our group, people are having anxiety just in the finality. We are such a tight-knit group."

These medical and nursing students are also graduating amid mass social upheaval. Protests have been held around the country in response to the killing of George Floyd by police officer Derek Chauvin.

Lu Homo said that doc-



Raul Roa | Staff Photographer

A VEHICLE is decorated for the UC Irvine School of Medicine's first ever drive-through commencement ceremony for the class of 2020 at the school on Saturday.

tors need to be aware of the racial and social disparities in the healthcare system.

"It's not just about the pandemic, you are graduating during a period of unrest where many innocent black lives have been lost," Lu Homo said. "Graduating medical school and earning this degree at this time means we are in a place of privilege."

"This particular degree on the one hand is hard-earned — 20 years of education — but also a means to an end for a purpose, and that purpose is we have this duty to be able to recognize that there are inequities in our healthcare system."

But these early-career

healthcare workers are needed now more than ever.

"I am a Christian and I believe God has placed a calling in my life to become a nurse," Bailey said. "So right now I believe there is more of a need for myself and people like me than any time that we have experienced in our recent history."

"I am excited for the challenge. I know Vanguard has prepared me to be a novice nurse in the hospital, and I trust the organizations I work for will be doing the best they can to protect the employees."

benjamin.brazil@latimes.com
Twitter: @benbrazil

MARCH

Continued from page R4

den Grove and is recovering from hip surgery, before coming to the protest. She previously went to the one in San Clemente over the weekend.

She took a break from the walking to stand on the side and chant "Say his name," as the crowd responded "George Floyd."

"I am so sick and tired of seeing on social media the brutality and the violent deaths that take place against the black community," she said. "I'm tired of the systematic and intrinsic oppression and inequality. I want this to stop, and I'm so glad to see the young people out there."

Everyone out there at the protest in the midst of a pandemic is putting themselves at risk, she said.

"But this issue is too critical and important to the future of America that we can't be locked up in our

"Complacency is not acceptable anymore. We have to actively and willfully change the system."

She carried a sign that said "Korean Americans for Black Lives."

"As a Korean American, I wanted to be out here, because historically, there has been misguided animosity between our communities," she said, referring to the tensions between the Korean American and black communities during the 1992 L.A. riots.

As the protesters walked nearby Garden Grove's

Koreatown, she pointed out that many of the elders that run the local mom-and-pop shops there lost their businesses during the riots and moved to Orange County afterward.

Bryan S. Kim remembered the hamburger shop his father owned during the time of the riots. He said he's proud his father's black and Latino neighbors helped him protect his restaurant so it wasn't physically destroyed. Yet, the store never financially recovered.

Kim is a pastor who co-founded the Ekko Church in Fullerton, and he came to the protest with his fellow pastors and church members carrying signs that said "Asian American Pastors for Black Lives."

"The history of the churches in America is that they have often been too silent, especially during the Civil Rights era," Kim said.

"A lot of churches and a lot of Christians kept their mouths shut ... But we're a new generation of Christians, and we're saying the Lord is out here. We believe Jesus would have been out here. And also as Asians, we have often been too silent. So we want to make sure the black community understands that we stand with our brothers and sisters."

He said it was encouraging to see so many people out, but at the same time, he felt embarrassed as an American that these incidents of police brutality against the black community keep happening.

"We're praying," he said. "And we believe protest is

a form of prayer."

When the crowd returned to the clock tower, the organizers asked everyone to get down on the ground for a moment of silence lasting 8 minutes and 46 seconds, the amount of time that Derek Chauvin had his knee on George Floyd's neck before he died.

Many lied down flat on their stomachs, with their hands behind them as if handcuffed.

And about half an hour after curfew, the crowd had dispersed peacefully.

The morning after, Agu felt sore from walking and her throat hurt from screaming into the megaphone during the protest. But she was happy.

Nguyen said she's getting requests from other organizations that felt they set a good example for a peaceful protest and want to learn from Meep.

She said it was important people know that while it's great to come out for a protest, it's even more important to translate that energy into direct action, whether it involves voting locally, signing petitions, donating or attending city council meetings.

"Change is not going to happen overnight," Agu said, pointing to a quote she saw online: "Black lives matter even when it's not a trend."

"I hope everyone continues for days and months and years to come to spread awareness and fight for change."

adatseng@latimes.com
Twitter: @adatseng