

## Meet the Protesters

The New York Times

July 26, 2020 Sunday

Late Edition - Final

Copyright 2020 The New York Times Company

**Section:** Section MM; Column 0; Magazine Desk; Pg. 4

**Length:** 823 words

### Body

---

National

meet the protesters

Tiana Day, 17, standing, helped organize a protest of 10,000 people on the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco in June. That's her co-organizer, Mimi Zoila, 19, on the far right with the red-and-white sign.

wenty-six million. That's how many Black Lives Matter protesters, according to one estimate, poured onto the streets across the United States in the month after George Floyd was killed by a white police officer in Minneapolis. These first-time organizers were among those who stepped up to lead. BREANNA COLLAZO, 11, THE BRONX

Breanna Collazo was recording a fifth-grade assignment when she had an epiphany. Her drama teacher had asked the class to submit videos responding to George Floyd's death -- but Breanna wanted to reach more people. "I wanted to speak up for me and everybody who feels like just because they're kids, they don't have a voice," she says. So she decided to organize a protest.

Since neither she nor her parents had been to a protest before, they decided to attend one together, so they'd know what to expect. While demonstrating in Manhattan, Breanna got an idea: "Start with a speech around the injustice," she says, and march after.

The next day, she did just that. In front of around 25 people, Breanna spoke about racism and the tragedy of George Floyd's death. Then she led a march around her block twice, joined by family, neighbors, friends and teachers carrying signs she had made. Members of her parents' car club followed, honking their horns; some classmates joined virtually. "People thought I was cuckoo bananas for trying to do this," she says. "Just because I'm little doesn't mean I can't."

Since her protest, Breanna has continued conversations with her peers about police brutality. "I feel like I have a responsibility now," she says. She wants to organize another protest -- this time, she hopes, with even more kids. By Charley Locke

TIANA DAY, 17, SAN RAMON, CALIF.

Until June, Tiana Day had never been to a protest before -- let alone led one. As one of only a few Black kids in her hometown, "I always just wanted to blend in," she says. Still, something inside her was itching to make change. She just wasn't sure what that change needed to be.

## Meet the Protesters

It came into focus after Floyd died. The issue was close to home: Tiana's dad was previously profiled, or unfairly targeted, by the police, she says. The video of Floyd's death made the threat of police brutality even more horrifyingly real. "We could all put ourselves in his shoes," she says. "It just changed everything."

The next week, she helped lead her first protest. Then, while attending another protest, she saw a comment by Mimi Zoila, 19, on Instagram. Mimi, who is Cuban-American, was looking for a Black co-organizer to lead a protest across the Golden Gate Bridge.

Tiana DMed her, and less than 24 hours later, they were marching above the San Francisco Bay. Nearly 10,000 people showed up, spanning the bridge and spilling onto the street on either side. She noticed that many of the demonstrators were not Black: "They were allies, and that was so empowering."

A few days earlier, Tiana's dad told her he and her grandfather had both been activists when they were young. Suddenly, her own activism made perfect sense: "It's in my blood," she says. By Jessica Bennett

JEFFREY JIN, 17; ERIKA ALVAREZ, 17; AND FOYIN DOSUNMU, 16, KATY, TEX.

As protests gripped the country last month, there was at least one place that seemed quiet: a Houston suburb called Katy. For three teenagers who lived there, that was a problem. After all, Erika Alvarez, Jeffrey Jin and Foyin Dosunmu had each seen and experienced racism in Katy. "Katy loves to think it's progressive," Erika says, "but nothing ever happens."

When Foyin, who is Black, moved there, a white neighbor verbally attacked her family, assuming they were trying to rob their new home. She has also heard racist slurs at school, as have Jeffrey, who is Chinese-American, and Erika, who moved to Katy from Venezuela four years ago. "It hurts, realizing that you've been made fun of and the center of racist jokes," Jeffrey says.

So last month, the trio organized a protest, hoping it would push residents of Katy to acknowledge their own prejudices. Calling themselves Katy4Justice, they planned it in four days over text and video chat. By the day of the march, 1,000 people had RSVPed on Facebook -- and more than 3,000 showed up. Black local leaders, Foyin and some of their peers addressed the crowd, delivering speeches and reciting poetry.

Afterward, the teenagers began fund-raising for a local organization for L.G.B.T.Q. youth experiencing homelessness. "I definitely feel like it's opening a lot of people's eyes," Foyin says. The march might be over, but Katy4Justice isn't done yet. By Mihir Zaveri —Š

Protesters: John G Mabanglo/EPA, via Shutterstock. Statues: Illustration by Jamiel Law.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/26/magazine/26mag-26nationalb.kidprotests.html>

## Graphic

---

PHOTO: Tiana Day, 17, standing, helped organize a protest of 10,000 people on the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco in June. That's her co-organizer, Mimi Zoila, 19, on the far right with the red-and-white sign. (PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN G MABANGLO/ EPA, VIA SHUTTERSTOCK)

**Load-Date:** July 26, 2020