

Protestors stage 'die-in'

Activists swarm Main Street during annual Christmas in Davidson event



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A group of about 200 students and several faculty and staff members staged a die-in protest on Main Street Saturday night to protest police violence against people of color.

The protest took place in front of Summit Coffee and Main Street Books during the last night of the Town of Davidson's annual Christmas in Davidson event.

At about 7:15 p.m., the protestors laid down in the street in silence after walking over en masse from the Davidson College campus. They wore white T-shirts with the names of victims who have died at the hands of law enforcement officials and slogans such as "Black Lives Matter." Some held signs with the same slogans.

After about five minutes, a speaker rose from the ground to explain the group's aims to a gathering crowd before returning to the ground. "Black people have become targets of white racist brutality and we are tired," Gladys McLean '17, the speaker, said through a megaphone. "We stand in solidarity with the families, the friends, and the communities of those who have died."

The gathered crowd included Christmas in Davidson attendees who encountered the protest and students and faculty who came to look on in support of the demonstrators. The crowd responded to the opening remarks with applause and cheers, but boos and shouts of "Go away!" could also be heard over McLean.

After every four and a half minutes of silence, McLean and another student wearing the name of a victim rose from the ground to break the silence. McLean read the name of a victim and told the crowd how the victim died, before reiterating the group's demands for justice. Six victims were named: Michael Brown, Jonathan Ferrell, Eric Garner, Aiyana Stanley Jones, Trayvon Martin and Tamir Rice.

Student-led committee organized protest

Saturday night's protest in Davidson came after weeks of protests across the country in response to the grand jury decisions not to indict the officers who killed Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri and Eric Garner in Staten Island, New York. The Davidson protesters added their voices to the nationwide clamor over these rulings and protested against the systemic racism that allows such decisions to occur.

"Clearly there were these recent incidents that have become high profile cases," Christi Moore '15 said. "It's not just, I would say personally, police brutality against people of color. I would



Students lie on the road to raise awareness about recent instances of police brutality. Photos by Michelle Wan and Andrew Rikard.

say it's a deeper issue. It's a systemic racism in our country that has become overt racism. Injustices and discrimination exist in our country."

"When we first sat down to talk about this protest it wasn't about one case or two cases," Will Vaughn '15 said. "It was that we as a nation, continuously and historically fail to live up to the definition of justice. We always quote Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'injustice somewhere is a threat to injustice everywhere,' but that is just a problem now as it was 50, 60 years ago, and that is a problem."

Moore and Vaughn were part of a self-organized committee of students from various campus organizations that led the planning of the protest. At the scene, they were joined by a diverse group of students from various backgrounds who also felt strongly about racial injustice.

"We're tired of hearing people say all lives matter — yes we know all lives matter — what we want to focus on is how black lives matter," Brian Parker '15, who participated in the 'die-in,' said.

"In terms of the sheer volume and diversity of students that were involved in the die-in, I don't think we can compare it with anything else [that has happened in Davidson]," Dr. Tae-Sun Kim, director of multicultural affairs, said. "This was a very multi-ethnic student movement."

Protest planned to disrupt Christmas event

At the scene Saturday evening, on-lookers were heard responding to the protestors with positive remarks in support of the protestors' actions. Protestors later reported townspeople saying "great job" to them as they left Main Street. Others heard a woman on the sidewalk explaining the protestors' position to men who were against their actions. One woman held a sign that read "All Lives Matter."

Some in the crowd, however, had negative remarks criticizing the demonstration. On-lookers were heard saying that the demonstration would "ruin Christmas in Davidson." One man starting singing "White Christmas." Parker said he heard one man saying he wished he had a tractor to run over students with.

Causing a public disruption was, however, the point of the demonstration for the organizers. The organizers wanted to reach an audience of families and young people to bring attention to and start conversations about systemic racial injustice.

"By people thinking that this is the wrong forum for demonstrating a deep and prevalent injustice, that made it a perfect forum for this," Vaughn said. "Think not about your thirty min-

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utes that you feel was disrupted in the smallest of ways. Think of families, communities, the little kids who don't have an older brother now, or the kids who grow up with their parents teaching them why in public they have to act a certain way, because one move that is perceived as wrong by a person in authority could be the end of their life."

Faculty and staff attended in support

The over 200 people laying in the street Saturday evening included several college administrators and faculty members who lent their support to the student-led demonstration.

Dr. Ernest Jeffries, assistant dean of students, heard about the plans through his role as advisor to the Black Student Coalition, many of whose members were part of the demonstration planning. "Not only do we support students, but it