

# Tribal members join Black Lives Matter march

By Danielle Frost  
Smoke Signals staff writer

DALLAS — Hundreds of people flooded the streets of Dallas on Wednesday, June 10, in support of the Black Lives Matter movement.

The peaceful protest against police brutality toward African Americans included several Tribal members, who all agreed that a show of solidarity in supporting police reform and ending systemic racism was essential.

Protests began in cities throughout the United States in late May and spread across the world after the death of George Floyd while in the custody of Minneapolis, Minn., police officers on May 25.

A cell phone video showing former police officer Derek Chauvin kneeling on Floyd's neck for almost nine minutes while Floyd repeatedly said "I can't breathe" and called for his mother has been circulated widely across the Internet and called widespread attention to police brutality toward people of color.

Tribal member Jordan Mercier, his wife Amanda and Tribal member children, Ila, 5, and Vincent, 8 months, sat in their vehicle

in a parking lot next to where attendees stood on the sidewalk.

Jordan, Amanda and Ila held signs that read "Black Lives Matter" aloft in their car. It was a way for the young family to safely attend a protest, avoid the COVID-19 pandemic and show support. As a Tribal member, Jordan feels it is important to stand in solidarity with the black community in uprooting racism.

"We're trying to show our support for the black community and stand with them in their struggle to end police brutality and violence against black people," Jordan said.



Photo by Timothy J. Gonzalez

**Tribal members Auburn Logan, left, and Seq'hiya Simmons, 13, raise their fists at the Polk County Courthouse while taking part in a Black Lives Matters march held in Dallas on Wednesday, June 10. The march was in response to the death of George Floyd while in police custody in Minneapolis, Minn.**



**Tribal member Auburn Logan, center, participates in a Black Lives Matters march held in Dallas on Wednesday, June 10.**

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family are safe."

Tribal member Auburn Logan first heard about the Dallas protest on Twitter and used her various social media platforms to spread the word and encourage other Tribal members to attend. She stood along Kings Valley Highway and Ellendale Avenue holding a sign while passing cars honked in support.

"I also reached out to a bunch of people in our community and told them about it," she said. "It is at this point and time that black lives really need to be honored. I am here to show my love for the black community. I feel that love will always win out over hate."

Tribal members Shayla Myrick-Meyer and Sarah Ross stood on the sidewalk at Ellendale Avenue, burning sage and repeating "Black Lives Matter" with the crowd. It was their first time at a BLM protest.

"We are here to stand for justice for our black brothers and sisters," she said. "We have black Tribal members and black baby cousins. We are doing this for them."

"This is amazing," Ross said as she looked at fellow protestors. "We are showing solidarity because this hits close to home."

The two learned of the protest after seeing a post on the Dallas Police Department's Facebook page that supported the event and encouraged people to attend.

"This past weekend, there was a very large and peaceful demonstration in the city of Salem, supporting equality for all and voicing their demands for justice and the end to excessive force by police, especially as it impacts our African American community," Chief of Police Tom Simpson said. "To my knowledge, this event and its message was not marred with violence or property damage."

He added that event organizers had been in touch with the police department and City Manager Brian Latta.

"(We) fully support their right to express their viewpoints and share their important message," Simpson said. "The majority of the participants in this event are local residents — your friends and neighbors — who care deeply about ending racism and improving the reputation of our community. Recognizing the history of racism in our past, the community of Dallas today must work together to send the message to everyone that this is not the Dallas of the 21st century. Sadly, racism still exists throughout our country and we have to acknowledge that persons with this belief system likely reside in our area. Our ongoing task is to continuously (and) vigorously support equal rights for everyone."

William Jones of Salem held a megaphone and rallied protestors throughout the event, which ended at the Polk County Courthouse, where he and other community organizers spoke.

"Some people say we act like animals," he said. "But we are protecting ourselves. We are soldiers against racism."

At the courthouse, the protestors were joined by more people, ranging in age from toddlers to senior citizens. A small group of counter protestors stood at the fringes, holding a large American flag and handmade signs that read "All Lives Matter" and "Women's Rights Begin in the Womb."

As was the case during the march to the courthouse, vehicles drove by with their occupants honking and raising their fists in the air. A few people shouted obscenities from their vehicles, drove up and down the block with Confederate flags or told protestors to "go home," but by and large support for the movement was positive.

"We have to open up the dialogue about racism," event co-organizer Rebecca Hunt of Dallas said. "Seeing that people are comfortable with blatant racism is not OK. Also, there are hundreds of people who live here that won't put up with this anymore." ■



"I think it is important to talk about this movement and show our support."

"We've been having age-appropriate conversations with our daughter and talk about black history in America and how even today we still have to fight for human rights," Amanda said. "We have to make changes so our black friends and

Ad by Samuel Briggs III