

Hundreds take to Bucyrus streets in March Against Racism

By Kimberly Gasuras, CCN Reporter | June 8, 2020 7:16 am

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BUCYRUS — Approximately 200 people made their way to Millennium Park on Washington Square in Bucyrus on Saturday afternoon for the March Against Racism protest.

During a march down South Sandusky Avenue to Liberty Street and back, the crowd chanted, “No justice, no peace,” “Say his name, George Floyd,” “Black Lives Matter,” and “Say her name, Breonna Taylor.”

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The event was hosted in response to the growing number of people of color who have been killed due to police brutality and to end racism across the country. Several Bucyrus Police Department officers, including Police Chief Dave Koepke, and Mayor Jeff Reser, marched alongside the protestors.

“We need to come together to fight against police brutality and racism, not just locally but nationally,” said Ashley Clemons of Bucyrus, one of the event’s organizers.



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Several people spoke during the event, including Bucyrus residents Kiersten Markland and Amanda Constantine, who also helped organize the protest.

“We are fortunate in Bucyrus to have a police force who cares, who is compassionate about what is happening right now and who cares about black lives,” Constantine said before thanking local police officers for marching and participating in the event.

She said local law enforcement seems to be a rarity in the United States today.

“There are police officers across the country who are using excessive force and killing black men, women and children at disproportionately different rates,” Constantine said. “Eric Gardner, 43, I can’t breathe; Michael Brown, 18, I don’t have a gun, stop shooting; Trayvon Martin, 17, What are you following me for; Tamir Rice, 12, no last words; Breonna Taylor, 26, no last words; and George Floyd, 43, I can’t breathe.”

She said it is not just an issue about police officers treating the people they are hired to protect better.

“It’s a nice place to start, a necessary place to start, but we cannot let it end here,” Constantine said. “We need to take into consideration the issues of systematic oppression, racism, incarceration, complicit biases and police brutality that our country was built on and founded on.”

Bucyrus March Against Racism



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She said the more people learn and connect with others, the more everyone can grow and stand up for what is right.

Reser said the event was wonderful and gives him hope for the future.

“It was a peaceful march; they are making a statement and want justice,” Reser said. “We have tremendous safety forces and a wonderful police department. We want to make sure we treat everyone with dignity and respect because that is the secret to a happy community.”

James Phillips and Robin Lester of Bucyrus came to the event for a different reason than others.

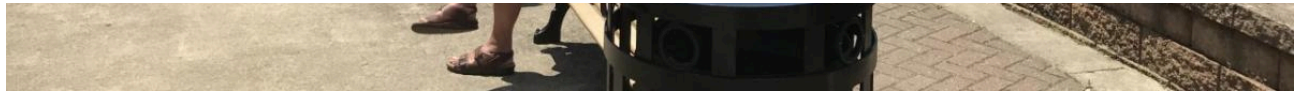
“I am part Filipino and part Native American,” Phillips said. “I think that all lives matter and wanted to support our community and our local police officers.”

Bucyrus resident Cody Dalton said he wants to become a cop someday and learned a lot about horrific incidents against black people while doing a senior project.

“It made me live what those people were going through and to have it happen again, I just could not be quiet,” he said.

He said it was time to stand up against police brutality and racism.





(Photo: Kimberly Gasuras/CCN)

His friend, Mya Salas, said racism has been happening for hundreds of years.

“Things have gotten better, but things still need to change,” Salas said. “I have black family members, including my little cousin, who is called the N-word by kids at school and that is not okay. It needs to end, and we all have to do what we can.”

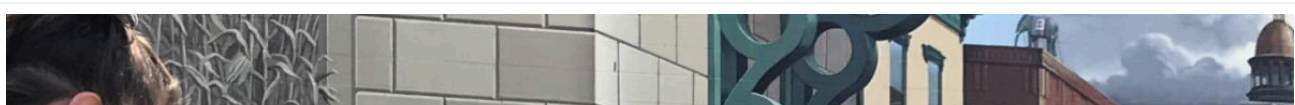
During the event, several vehicles drove by that adorned Trump 2020, Confederate battle and American flags.

Kaleb Stander, the driver of a white pickup truck, was with his two brothers and said all lives matter.

“We understand where they are coming from and have black friends. We are just showing our support for our president and law enforcement,” Stander said. “We don’t think they need to protest.”

A small group of men, who said they are from Bucyrus, brandished firearms while present at the march.

“One of the automatic weapons dudes said to me that the cops shouldn’t be the only ones with guns,” said Rachel Striker, who spoke with the men during the rally portion of the event. “So, I asked if he meant that because the government shouldn’t have all of the power and he agreed.”



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(Photo: Kimberly Gasuras/CCN)

Latonya Palmer of the Mansfield branch of the NAACP that encompasses Bucyrus, said the organization was founded in 1909 by both white and black people.

“Our organization is open to anyone who would like to join,” Palmer said.

Suggestions by several speakers to help combat racism and to become more compassionate and kind towards each other, including the black community, are to take courses, read books about racism, talk to people of color in the community and to speak out when they see or hear of racism.

Former Bucyrus City Council member Dan Wirebaugh said he is very encouraged to see so many young people taking part in the march and becoming interested in their community.

“The young people are the future,” Wirebaugh said. “We can make change happen in many ways and one of the best is at the voting box.”

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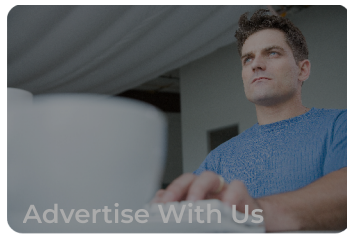
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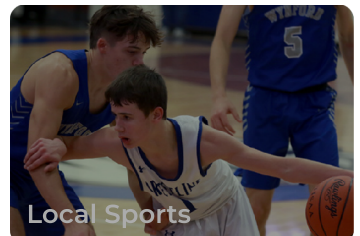
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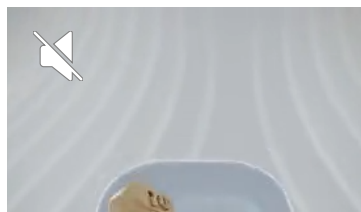
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