

Crescent City residents host second Black Lives Matter rally Sunday

June 8, 2020



More than 100 locals joined a rally in Crescent City Sunday in support of the national Black Lives Matter movement in the wake of the Memorial Day death of George Floyd in police custody in Minneapolis.

Teachers Sarah Elston, Paige Thompson and Jenn Longrie organized the second rally in three weeks.

“We are out here to support the black community, we’re out here to support communities nationwide and worldwide that are standing up to say that people have been silent too long,” Thompson said. “I’m really glad to see we have the support of our local law enforcement agencies. They’ve been wonderful. It’s great to see so many different ages, so many groups of people all standing together to say Crescent City sees you and black lives do matter.”

Police Chief Richard Griffin addressed the crowd at the start of their rally, noting many of the signs that were calling for change.

“We’ve already changed one of our policies – the carotid is no longer in our policies, the choke hold,” Griffin said, noting the quick action taken after Gov. Gavin Newsom banned the hold on Friday. “We’re also progressive on this before. A lot of the policies you are wanting in place are already in place in California, especially the Crescent City Police Department.”

“Just understand, we’re here with you, we are community, too. We serve you, we understand our oath to you, and I’m ready for some change, too,” Griffin added.

Griffin told The Triplicate residents in the large metropolitan cities, where many of the protests were followed by looting and rioting, could learn a lot from a small town like Crescent City.

“You know your neighbors. If America could get back to that, know your neighbor, love your neighbor, a lot of things could be solved,” he said. “A lot of the negative stuff I don’t put towards the movement. I think there’s a lot of people who have been cooped up been locked in our houses for three months. So, you had a lot of anger to begin with towards the government. This sparked it. It was kind of a perfect storm with no distractions.”

Thompson also said she had no worries of the message of Black Lives Matter being lost where things have gotten violent.

“That’s part of expressing the message. That’s not how we are expressing the message, here. But the riots and any sort of property destruction and anything like that are not distracting from the movement. It’s one way of expressing support for the movement and expressing that black lives do matter. It’s been too long in our country that they haven’t,” Thompson said.

As a history teacher, Longrie said history is written by the victors and whites have been the victors since the beginning.

“People of color, and black people specifically, have tried kneeling. They get attacked for that, saying it’s an affront to the flag, veterans, etc. They’ve tried peacefully protesting. They get beat down by police and other people. Everything they’ve tried and they’re not being heard,” Longrie said.

To help get the message out from more voices, Shawn Dean, a former college advisor at Del Norte High School and a member of the NAACP, was distributing information on how to get involved with and donate to the Humboldt County NAACP Chapter. He also recommended Del Norte County groups like True North Organizing Network’s campaign against bullying and for grade-school students to look into the Gay-Straight Alliance and the indigenous people’s clubs.

Thompson added the rally serves the perfect opportunity to bring attention to a problem that permeates all parts of society, from small towns like Crescent City to large urban centers.

“White supremacy is everywhere. And even if you yourself are not white supremacist or you yourself don’t feel yourself being a racist, it is so interwoven in the way our education system, our justice system,” Thompson explained. “It’s hard to hear things like that at first. It’s hard to acknowledge. You get defensive. It

takes listening to the voices of the people who are affected... really hearing what they're saying and taking yourself out of the center of it and put other groups at the center of the conversation.”