

Another Point of View

Aydra Maki

Aydra Maki is a self-described member of the youth activism industrial complex, and is passionate about prison abolition, social justice, and economic equality.

“It’s always been this way.” The man, strongly gripping an American flag in his hands, continued. “The police have always protected us. I don’t see why we have to change it now.”

He had been taking down posters calling for the abolition of the police, and I stood in front of him, attempting to hinder his progress. Over the past few weeks, my rural community split into two over one of the most pressing questions of our time: Do Black Lives Matter?

So, while I and hundreds of other people showed up at protests and vigils honoring those killed by police brutality, we were met with glares, obscene gestures, and foul language from others. Still, smiles, waving, shouts of support by passers-by, and a devotion to an honorable cause kept us going. Nevertheless, it was disappointing to see my community divided so drastically over one (seemingly) obvious statement. To me and my fellow protesters, Black lives mattered. We believed a person’s life shouldn’t be taken so easily, and so senselessly, by agents of the state. We believed this violence had gone on for far too long and stolen far too many lives. For me, with the memories of people leaning out of their car windows to scream at us, driving through our crowds at high speeds, sexually harassing teenage girls at the front of my mind, this belligerent man with his flag crumbling up our posters was the last straw.

“The police have always protected us?” I asked, arms crossed. “Who is ‘us’? Did they protect Breonna Taylor? Elijah McClain? Tamir Rice? Aiyana Jones? No, they killed them. They killed them all.” Above my mask, my eyes were hardened. “The police weren’t made to protect us. One day, you might find that they won’t protect you. Because people are secondary to them, always. But we can do better.” I pointed at the protesters, standing in a line on the sidewalk, brandishing signs, chanting, singing. Hopeful. “We have to do better.”