

Black women's lives matter

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By Mariah Stewart Ferguson Fellow

The late rapper Tupac once rhymed, “And since we all came from a woman, got our name from a woman and our game from a woman, I wonder why we take from our women, why we rape our women, do we hate our women?”

Those words echo today as black women killed by police officers have been overshadowed by black males whose deaths sparked a national movement. Mike Brown, Eric Garner and Freddie Gray are names bellowed in protest chants that have been heard around the world in the Black Lives Matter movement, while the narratives of slain black women remain unknown.

May 21 was The National Day of Action for Black Women and Girls. Demonstrations took place across the country and spread across social media with the hashtag #SayHerName. One of the boldest demonstrations took place in San Francisco, where women stood topless while blocking traffic. Their message: They love our bodies, but not us.

Local activists chose to stand in solidarity by memorializing the death of Kimberlee Randale-King. Twenty-one-year-old King died in police custody while detained at Pagedale city jail last September. St. Louis County Police said King hung herself. However, King's family insists she did not commit suicide.

A few dozen demonstrators, mostly women, gathered at The St. Charles Rock Road MetroLink station. They marched a little over half-mile to Pagedale City Hall. There, demonstrators released balloons in memoriam of police-slain black women.

“Sexism,” “misogyny,” “racism,” “state violence” and “patriarchy” were among the words written on boxes that some women held as they marched. The boxes were placed inside the foyer of the building. Brittany Ferrell, co-founder of activist group Millennial Activists United, said the boxes represented the burdens women carry.

“If you follow the Black Lives Matter movement, often times black women's lives are often overlooked,” Ferrell told *The American*.

“The Black Lives Matter movement is not limited to black men, and we need to remember that we push, force and affirm that we matter,” Ferrell said. “We are the same women that upheld this movement. Black women need to be recognized, not forgotten about.”

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