

# PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATION

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he added. "We always expect for all the contingencies," the police chief responded as additional patrol units were dispatched to the area.

## Issuing a statement

About 30-minutes later, Sunnyside City Manager Martin Casey released a statement on the death of George Floyd and police actions. "Like so many around the nation, we were deeply saddened and disturbed by police actions in the death of George Floyd in Minnesota. These actions are entirely inconsistent with the values of the Sunnyside Police Department."

The media release went on to read, "People have the right to exercise their rights to free speech and assembly. We have a responsibility to listen, to seek understanding, and to pursue positive change together. We will continue to embrace opportunities for peaceful and constructive dialogue."

What initially began as an online act of intimidation to sidetrack the peaceful demonstration and change the narrative, had the opposite effect. Community, business leaders and law enforcement officials were unified in safeguarding the public's rights to free speech and assembly.

Casey's message concluded with a public safety reminder of how everyone can share in the vigilance for maintaining nonviolent rallies. "We also recognize that some individuals have attempted to take advantage of recent events to engage in divisive violence and destruction. We will act responsibly to protect the peace and safety of our community. We urge the public to remain civil and not to attempt to intervene or interfere with police responses to such incidents, to help reduce risks to all involved."

## Starting a conversation

Shortly thereafter, Pastors Joel Rodriguez of Sunnyside United Methodist and Greg Martel of Grandview Presbyterian Church arrived at the Walmart parking lot to provide a spiritual presence in the face of the current socio-problematics.

"It's a breaking point in history. There are so many things going on right now with the pandemic and now this. There's so much violence and injustice, it's terrible," Rodriguez expressed. "One leads to the other... People are stressed out," Martel immediately replied.

"This is a collective effort. Everyone in our society and our community has to be involved. It's not possible to achieve peace if there's not the cooperation between all the parts," Rodriguez described as a man approached the clergymen who announced he just came from Tacoma and heard there was supposed to be a rally here.



Patrick Shelby/Sunnyside Sun

**RESPONSE SIGNALS PEACEFUL SUPPORT** — Sergeant Chris Sparks shares in the responsibility with fellow law enforcement personnel to take positive action which represent the values of the Sunnyside Police Department during Thursday evening's demonstration.

He proceeded to initiate a discussion and asked Pastor Rodriguez what his perspective was regarding recent events. Specifically questioning which event the Pastor was speaking about and he replied, "George Floyd."

"It was an unfortunate incident, but what we need to realize is this; the man was a criminal. The man was on drugs. The minority, they want to hold up this guy as a martyr, that he's some kind of hero," Trooper Garcia said after he identified himself as a C lass of 1994 Grizzly graduate.

By 5 p.m., a handful young people showed up with their handmade signs and walked over to the pedestrian island. Shortly thereafter, more activists began to join, and the group expanded to more than 12.

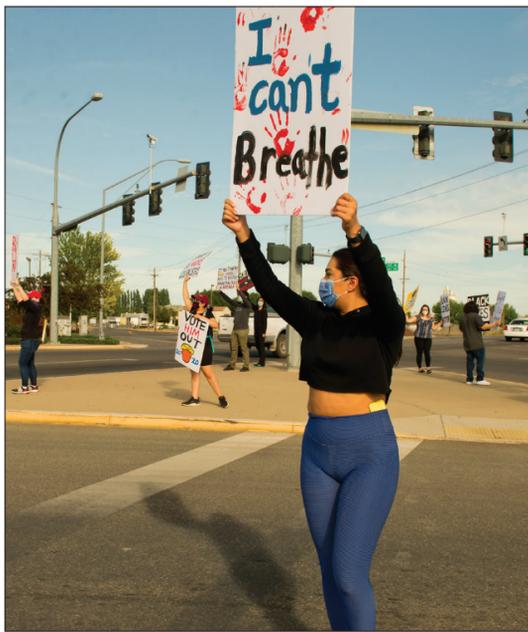
Yessica Honstein was waiting at the traffic light on Lincoln Avenue in her vehicle with the window rolled down and was speaking with the demonstrators in support of their message being displayed. The 24-year-old Sunnyside resident informed them she wanted to participate and parked her car across the highway.

"I also believe in this movement. I feel that America and the world has a problem with police brutality, and we need to put an end to it," Honstein acknowledged. "I truly believe protesting gets the word out."

The Police Chief and Sergeant Chris Sparks visited with the activists and made their supportive influence felt, in conjunction with the highly visible police deployment.

The officers maintained a cooperative role with the group of young adult protestors, along with Benancio Garcia III, Republican National Hispanic Assembly and Sunnyside High School 1990 alumni.

Both parties possessed differing viewpoints of



Patrick Shelby/Sunnyside Sun

**AWARENESS FOR POSITIVE CHANGE** — 25-year-old Clariza Maldonado, protest organizer and 11-year Sunnyside resident, feels the time is now to communicate nonviolent ideals which can have a widespread effect on creating societal acceptance.

the discussion and police personnel were on site, stationed around the perimeter to ensure individual rights to free speech and assembly for all would be exercised while carrying out community safety duties.

There were no reported acts of vandalism to any of the surrounding businesses during the three-hour demonstration which drew about 30 protestors.

22-year-old Amber Servin of Grandview conveyed how infuriated she was by seeing all the suffering going on in all lives of color, but specifically in black lives and throughout their history.

"It's time for all of us to stand up for what we believe in. We can make a difference anywhere. It starts in our small towns and in our homes at the dinner table. Having that conversation is not that easy. But we have to!"

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# VALENTIN TRUJILLO

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take their breaks six feet apart. "The DC has done a lot better than other jobsites I've seen. They responded quickly," Trujillo acknowledged.

Trujillo is grateful that his employers are thinking of their employees and are taking measures such as temperature checks. He believes it is all for the better of the community.

"My employers also sent everyone home with a care package, filled with toilet paper, paper towels, rice, beans, and a case of water," the order filler expanded.

The 26-year-old also expressed how he would love to see more concern in his age group. "I wonder if they would take it a bit more serious if they had a close family member affected or at 'high-risk' for this situation," he stressed.

The young man's mother was diagnosed with cancer and has gone through chemotherapy which leads to her being more susceptible for infection.

Trujillo, therefore, has been doing all he can to reduce her risk by socially distancing himself from her, having only seen her once since the stay-at-home order. "I'm just trying to keep my parents safe," he reiterated.

With essential workers seen as heroes, Trujillo laughed at the notion saying, "I'm just doing my job. The labels of heroes should be given to hospital workers, doctors, nurses, employees like that."

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