

PROTESTS

Pair of Siblings Hold Daily Demonstration in South Pasadena

BY [TARA LYNN WAGNER](#) | SOUTH PASADENA

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SOUTH PASADENA, Calif. – If you’ve driven through South Pasadena over the past six weeks, you may have noticed an ongoing peaceful demonstration. Not a huge crowd moving through the streets or gathered in a park, but one or two people, standing on a corner, outside for hours at a time.

What You Need To Know

- Fahren James was shot with rubber bullets at the Black Lives Matter demonstration on May 30
- Her brother London Lang helped create a group called South Pasadena Youth for Police Reform

One is Fahren James. Every day she arrives around noon to put up a collection of signs. Each night, she takes them down again.

Across the street, her younger brother, London Lang, holds a sign of his own. On it, he's written "We Are Not Toys." Looking at him on his corner, James shook her head in an older sibling sort of way.

"There's so much more that can be said than 'we are not toys,'" she said. "He drives me crazy with this but this is his first sign."

Even though she may not love her brother's sign, James understands the meaning behind it.

"He feels like police use our bodies as toys," she explained. "You know, like they're just target practice. Like we're disposable."

It's a personal message with a personal connection. On May 30, James was at a Black Lives Matter demonstration in West Hollywood when police started firing rubber bullets.

"I was shot twice. Up close. Once in my stomach and once in my arm there," she said as she scrolled through photos of her injuries on her phone.

Lang was at that same demonstration when he got the call that his sister had been hit. His first thought: "She's dead. That is the first thing that went through my mind."

Two days later, he made his sign and came to the corner of Fair Oaks Blvd and Mission in South Pasadena. It was a knee-jerk reaction that has grown into a cause. Since then, he's helped form a group called South Pasadena Youth for Police Reform, focusing his activism on his own community.

"Because I want change in South Pasadena," Lang explained, "and people, I feel, rely on me to do it and I feel I can definitely do it."

As soon as James was strong enough, she joined him on the sidewalk. Sometimes they gather a crowd but more often than not, they're alone, either one or both of them, in the sun, for six hours. Throughout the day drivers show their support by honking. Passersby bring them water bottles. One woman drove up and handed them face shields after Fahren and a friend were spat on.

“People don’t have a clue what you’ve been through,” she said. “You know, they don’t know why you’re here, why this is important for you.”

For her, it’s important for a list of daily reasons that, over 40 years, she's just learned to live with -- from how she’s treated while shopping to how she’s perceived at work.

“You have to work extra harder because you have to really prove your worth,” she says, her voice cracking with emotion. “It's been normalized so it never provoked me to stand out like this.”

Until now. She's been protesting on and off since Trayvon Martin, but this time is different. Watching George Floyd die under a police officer's knee, she says, was “absolutely the most heartbreaking thing that I ever saw.”

But the main reason she's been protesting consistently for week can be found across the street. As the sister of a young Black man, she worries a lot. She described how once she broke down when her mom called late at night because she immediately assumed the worst.

“That’s how I worry about him, you know....” she said, her voice trailing as she wiped away tears.

They’ve had talks, she says, about police, even though his father is retired LAPD, and also about people, racism, and perception.

“It’s not just you that you represent,” she explained, “it’s the world, the Black world that you represent.”

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they are in the midst of planning a rally in front of City Hall. They also recently organized a storytelling forum with two city councilmembers who are on a subcommittee that is looking at the future of policing in South Pasadena. He'd like to do more, but he admits, he doesn't know a lot about politics.

"I really need to learn and organize myself before I get to that," he said.

James believes he'll get there. Real change takes time, she says, in the meantime, she'll be there representing the both of them.

"I'm relentless with this," she said, twisting wire through the construction fence she uses to display her signs. "There's no break for me."

She's fine to keep the flame going on her own so her brother doesn't burn out.

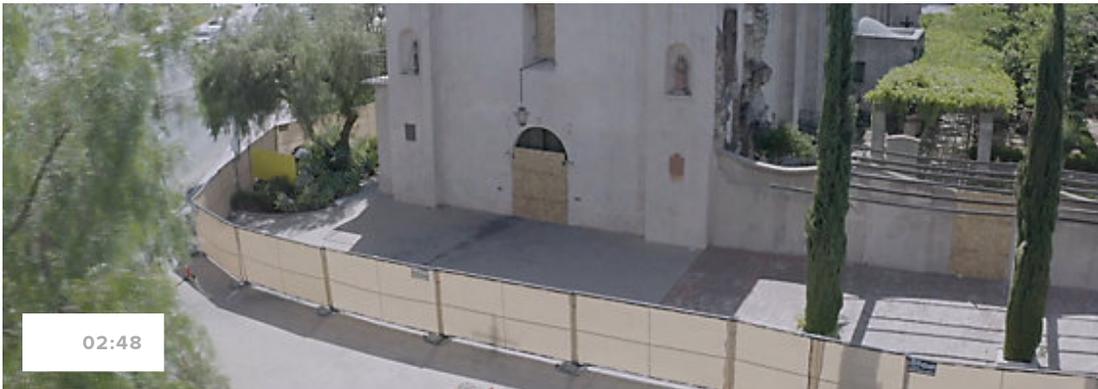


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