

**PERSONALITIES
&
PROFILES**



PEACEFUL PROTEST: Students gather on campus (above) before taking to the streets (facing page)

Hands Up, Don't Shoot: BSU Students Protest Michael Brown Slaying

Story and Photographs by Imani Davy

Students at historically black colleges and universities last fall took a stand against racial profiling and police brutality by protesting the decision by a grand jury in Missouri not to indict a white police officer in the fatal shooting of unarmed black teenager Michael Brown.

Bowie State University students protested the decision during a march around campus that prompted other students to join the march that soon moved off campus and onto Route 197. Students chanted “no justice, no peace” and “hands up, don’t shoot” as they carried signs emblazoned with those phrases as well as “black lives matter.”

To commemorate Brown’s death, many students blocked an intersection by laying in the street for 4 ½ minutes, marking the 4 ½ hours that

Brown’s dead body lie in the street after he was shot to death by police officer Darren Wilson of the Ferguson Police Department. The protest brought traffic to a halt on the four-lane highway.

A few obscenities and racial slurs were hurled by white males driving past and an elderly white woman looked at the protesting students in disgust as they marched past her car, according to marchers.

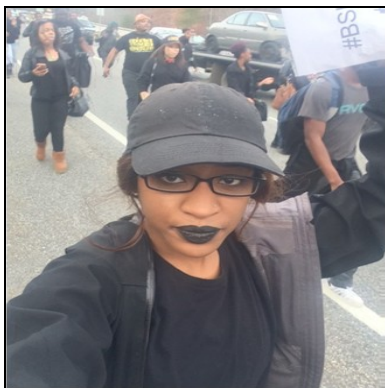
BSU SGA President Milan Mobley urged everyone to stop what they were doing, even if they were in class, to join the protest. “Your lives are in danger more than ever, and I think that we all witnessed that yesterday,” she said. “The executive board of the Student Government Association worked all night long ‘til today thinking of ways

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on how we can stop [what has been going on].”

Destiny Onwukwe, a 20-year-old student at Bowie State University, said that the protest “was surprisingly successful... [Students] usually go to parties and [other events], but don’t come to events that matter like [the protest]. Yeah, I was just surprised.” She also stated that “we need justice. If we don’t get that, [our ancestors] basically fought for nothing...”

Bowie State students aren’t the only students who protested against injustice. On the same day, Morgan State University students peacefully protested against the verdict as well. The Baltimore Sun said



that “students blocked several intersections near campus, forming a giant square at Loch Raven Boulevard and Cold Spring Lane, shouting “no justice, no peace.”

Jackson State University, Delaware State University and Clark Atlanta University students also staged peaceful protests.

There is even uncertainty as to why there are national protests

and riots outside of Ferguson. Maryland Gov.-elect Larry Hogan, a Republican, said, “It’s not my place to second-guess a grand jury decision — especially one that didn’t happen in our state...It really doesn’t impact Maryland.”

There appears to be many reasons why people around the nation have decided to protest.

Many are claiming that the grand jury took too much time to come to a decision. According to the Washington Post, the Rev. Al Sharpton said, “There’s no reason the grand jury should be taking this long. It is very suspect to us that the grand jur[y] . . . appear[s] to be improperly expanded to where it is about to prove or disprove the accused rather than seeing if there is probable cause to go to trial. That is not proper use of the grand jury.”

Many disagree with how Brown was portrayed by the media and Wilson. Bill Maher said that Brown “was acting like a thug, not like a gentle giant” in response to the footage of Brown robbing a nearby 7-Eleven. Although Brown was described as a “gentle giant” by teachers and friends, Wilson compared him to a “demon.” He described the encounter as being “like a 5-year-old holding onto Hulk Hogan...Hulk Hogan, that’s how big he felt and how small I felt just from grasping his arm,” according to The New York Times. Wilson also said, “The only way I can describe it, it



looks like a demon, that’s how angry he looked...”

Many of Brown’s supporters believe that police are targeting African-Americans and are abusing their authority. They also say that the police do not make them feel safe, even though their job is to “serve and protect”.

Protests across the nation were rekindled by the failure of a grand jury in New York City to indict a white NYPD officer in the death of Eric Garner, an unarmed, black man, who was choked to death as he was being taken into custody by police, according to NBC News.

Protests have not been limited to the streets. Many have taken social media to express their anger. One of the trending hashtags on Twitter was “criming while white” where white individuals shared their encounters with police, showing the apparent lenience toward whites and not blacks. According to CNN, this hashtag “became Twitter’s highest trending topic worldwide.”