White Faces in a Black Movement: Why Their Voices Matter

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White faces in a black movement: Why their voices matter

Activist Patrick Waldo prepares for a Dec. 4 protest on the Staten Island Supreme Courthouse steps. (Credit: Chauncey Alcorn)

Erica Garner's passionate voice echoed through the frigid December air that night as she addressed her 35 followers at the steps of the Staten Island Supreme Courthouse.
It was one year and one day after a grand jury deliberating there voted not to indict the police officer that choked her father to death. To commemorate the somber anniversary, Erica, 25, wanted to get arrested committing an act of civil disobedience. What a symbolic gesture it would be if police arrest Eric Garner’s daughter a year after denying her family the justice it deserved, she thought.

Her original plan was to block traffic on the borough’s Verrazano-Narrows Bridge. To do that, Erica needed enough supporters to form a human chain across all lanes of the bridge’s traffic, but she couldn’t gather enough people in time.

That’s because some of the grassroots organizations that helped propel New York’s Black Lives Matter movement in the wake of the non-indictment—groups like NYC Shut It Down, Justice League NYC, and Millions March NYC—couldn’t agree where and how to protest on the one-year anniversary. Their varying philosophies and strategies on dismantling institutional racism created conflicts among them similar to the disputes between their Civil Rights-era ancestors a generation ago.

Since many declined to participate in the bridge demonstration, Erica gathered this handful of supporters to march through the streets of Staten Island, staging “die-in” protests in busy intersections before giving a final speech at the Bay Street site where police killed her father. Before the mission began, she addressed her followers.
“Y’all are my family, and my friends!” Erica shouted. “I got a whole bunch of family that could take over the roads, but guess what? [Only] y’all are here.

“This is the support that I need… Or I’ll do it with no support.”

Immediately her “family” chimed in.

“We got you, sis!” “We’re with you!” “Let’s go!” three protestors shouted sequentially.

Over Erica’s right shoulder, one of her adopted “brothers” stood silently in the shadows staring off into the night with a reflective gaze. This tall, thin, disheveled, white man wearing an “I Can’t Breathe” sweatshirt and wielding a sign bearing Eric Garner’s likeness was Patrick Waldo.

He is part of a largely ignored minority of white activists that have marched along with their black and brown brethren through the streets of New York and elsewhere in support of the Black Lives Matter movement. Their presence at rallies and protests has been perplexing to some and vexing to others, but its added impact on this movement, as in movements past, is noteworthy, especially to people like Erica.
Friends and family say Waldo, 31, who nine years ago moved to New York from his Norfolk, Va hometown, has always been a comedic goofball who is equally vocal about social causes.

A year after moving, he put those comedic chops to good use, taking improv classes at the legendary Upright Citizens Brigade Theatre (UCB) where he met several of his closest friends, including Matt McGorry, an actor who six years later got his big break playing a corrections officer on the Netflix hit show “Orange Is The New Black.”

Waldo’s friends say he wasn’t always so brazen about his views on racial politics, but what happened on July 17, 2014 changed him forever.
The ‘homicide’

Staten Islander Danielle Yhap, 42, covered her mouth in horror that afternoon as she and her three children watched the local news on their living room TV. The full-time College of Staten Island student knew something was wrong when she saw a slew of emergency vehicles speeding through the streets on her way home earlier that day, but she wasn't sure what happened until she watched the infamous Garner video for the first time.
“That’s Keir’s dad!” her youngest son shouted, referring to Keir Bethea, Eric Garner’s step son with whom Danielle’s son played football. “I was sick to my stomach. I felt nauseated,” Yhap remembers.

She watched Officer Daniel Pantaleo jump on Garner’s back and apply a chokehold against NYPD policy as at least six other officers wrestled the 6’3”, 350 lb. man to the ground, pressing firmly on his chest as they handcuffed him.

Yhap heard Garner wheeze, “I can’t breathe!” 11 times as life slowly left his body. She later read news reports about the NYPD’s ironic reaction to the ordeal—harassing and arresting witnesses who recorded the incident on cellphones rather than the officers who killed an unarmed man suspected of
a petty crime, keeping the only cop charged on paid administrative leave as a grand jury convened to decide whether the video, an NYPD coroner’s “homicide” ruling, and numerous eye witnesses were sufficient to meet the low probable cause standard of proof necessary to put Pantaleo on trial.

The fair-skinned, blonde-haired, green-eyed Yhap watched this entire episode play out publicly and she couldn’t stand it. She’d grown up working class on the borough's racially-diverse north shore and was well aware of the mistreatment police routinely doled out to black people. She’d witnessed it happen to her biracial sons and the black father of her youngest two children.

Yet, she’d never actively participated in any movement before Dec. 3, 2014 when a swelling tide of racial animus swallowed the streets of Manhattan.

“When there was no indictment, we knew we couldn’t just not do anything,” Yhap says.

**Shut it down**

![Image: Police bar protesters trying to shut down the Brooklyn Bridge following the Nov. 30th Ferguson, Mo. non-indictment of Officer Darren Wilson in the fatal shooting of black teen Mike Brown. (Credit: Chauncey Alcorn)](https://medium.com/@clalcorn/daily-news-version-white-faces-in-a-black-movement-why-their-voices-matter-c3d8a74d510d#.w4i625uwj)

Tension had been building for weeks around the country.
Thirteen days prior, NYPD rookie officer Peter Liang shot and killed Akai Gurley, another unarmed black man, in an East New York projects stairwell. Two days after that, Cleveland Police Officer Timothy Loemmann shot and killed 12-year-old Tamir Rice in a city park. Three days later, a Ferguson, Mo. grand jury’s decision not to indict Officer Darren Wilson for fatally shooting black teen Mike Brown led to riots.

All the drama made Mayor Bill de Blasio nervous. Dec. 3 was the night of the Rockefeller Christmas Tree lighting ceremony. A non-indictment in the Pantaleo case could lead to riots in his streets, adding to the nation’s growing racial powder keg.

It almost happened. And Waldo was there.

After watching the non-indictment announcement on NY1 from his Hells Kitchen apartment, he was thrown into a rage.

“This is New York City,” Waldo recalls saying to himself. “We’re supposed to be this bastion of progressiveness, of fairness and justice. It shook me to my core.”
He grabbed the “NYPD, BLOOD ON YOUR HANDS” picket sign he’d made months earlier and headed to Midtown.

Yhap also leapt into action after watching the announcement on TV.

“I can't believe this!” she yelled.

She emailed one of her professors saying she wouldn’t be in class that evening and called Heather Kirschner, her best friend and younger sister. The duo joined a chorus of angry protestors in Times Square that marched to the West Side Highway and tried to shut down traffic before being stopped by police.

Around the same time, Waldo stood on a street corner several blocks away at the intersection of Sixth Avenue and 50th Street where protestors were trying to shut down the tree lighting ceremony.
In the street, a large group of yelling, cursing, and jeering picketers marched up and down the block shouting chants about “killer cops,” injustice, and the mattering of black lives.

Across the street, they argued with pro-police bystanders and clashed with officers standing shoulder-to-shoulder behind barricades, walloping the chaotic scene from the tourist-friendly spectacle half a block away.

Waldo was alone on that corner when he eventually was confronted by white pedestrians annoyed by his sign. He was arguing Eric Garner’s case to the growing crowd of head-shaking, bird-flipping, police supporters when suddenly, a black female Black Lives Matter supporter approached him.

“F—you for not being in here with us!” she yelled.

At first, Waldo was taken aback, but then he had an epiphany.

“I was just standing by myself,” he realized. “She was basically saying, ‘Get in here and march with us!’”

On that day, both Waldo and Yhap officially became white activists in the Black Lives Matter movement.

A nation divided
All available polling on the Black Lives Matter cause shows Americans are divided along racial lines in how they perceive racism, police brutality against blacks, and the movement itself. An Aug. 20 Rasmussen survey found just 31 percent of black voters feel, “black lives matter,” is closest to their own views and only nine percent of whites felt the same.

An April YouGov.com poll found that 41 percent of white Americans think blacks are treated as fairly as whites while 76 percent of blacks disagree with that assertion.

“There is, in fact, a large racial divide in Americans’ views of racial unfairness in policing,” says Princeton Professor Tali Mendelberg, author of The Race Card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages, and the Norm of Equality.

“White Americans are the least likely to perceive racial discrimination,” she continues. “The reasons include factors that affect white Americans, such as lingering racial stereotypes or resentments, a desire to maintain a dominant position in a system of racial hierarchy, an ‘us versus them’ approach to race, and support for strong official authority.”

If hearing about the realities of racism from black people invokes a sense of tribalism among whites, hearing about it from white peers could help bridge the divide, according to Mendelberg.
“Studies show that when someone argues against their own interests, they are more credible,” she adds. “When white people take anti-racist stands, they are credible because they cannot be motivated by their narrow self-interest.”

Allies vs. ‘Saviors’

In truth, white activists have always played pivotal roles in our nation’s internal struggle with racism.

The NAACP, like the Black Lives Matter movement, was created in the wake of a highly-publicized string of lynchings and race-related violence against blacks that took place in 1908 and 1909, after which a group of 60 people got together in Springfield, Ill. to discuss a remedy to the ongoing problem.
In 1965, activist Viola Liuzzo was fatally shot in the face by members of the Ku-Klux Klan in support of Martin Luther King’s march from Selma to Montgomery, Ala. (Credit: Biography.com)

Among them were famed black scholars W.E.B. DuBois and Ida B. Wells, but 53 of the organization’s original 60 founders were white.

“It’s very important, I think, when a movement is started, that it’s not just one group of people,” says Hazel Dukes, president of the New York state chapter of the NAACP.

“It’s all human-loving and humanitarian people speaking out on it.”

Malcolm X realized this in 1965.

On Feb. 19 of that year, almost one year after he left the Nation of Islam and completed his Hajj pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia’s holy city of Mecca, the iconic ’60s radical interviewed with Gordon Parks for a Life Magazine article.

They reminisced about Malcolm’s travails in Harlem serving under Elijah Muhammad. Two days later, Malcolm was killed.

“Remember the time that white college girl came into the restaurant, the one who wanted to help the [black] Muslims and the whites get together and I
told her there wasn’t a ghost of a chance and she went away crying?” Malcolm asked Parks during the interview.

“Yes,” the author replied.

“Well, I’ve lived to regret that incident,” Malcolm continued. “In many parts of the African continent I saw white students helping black people… It’s a time for martyrs now. And if I’m to be one, it will be in the cause of brotherhood. That’s the only thing that can save this country.”

Malcolm’s pilgrimage allowed him for the first time to see outside America’s acute prism of racial caste and observe men of all hues united in their
service and love of a higher power. It didn’t dull his sense of injustice to the plight of the American Negro, but it did permit him to envision a scenario where sincere white people could be allies, not enemies or diversions.

He stood firm in his stance that blacks must determine their own destiny, but noted that white people seeking to end racism could help in another way.

“Where the really sincere white people have got to do their ‘proving’ of themselves is not among the black victims, but out on the battle lines of where America’s racism really is, and that’s in their own home communities,” X said in his book.

SIARA PB

Two days after Pantaleo’s non-indictment, pro Black Lives Matter demonstrators hosted a protest at the College of Staten Island. Yhap, Kirschner, and Krystal Sanchez, a 25-year-old black and Latina social work major, were there along with Lesley Amaro, 20, and Hyseung Yoo, 21. The quintet eventually became the founding executive board members of a predominately white student organization called Staten Island Against
Racism and Police Brutality (SIARA PB) despite resistance from administrators and fellow students on the school's student life committee who voted against chartering the group.

“There were six votes against us. I don’t know why,” said Sanchez, who serves as President of SIARA PB. “[School administrators] would say ‘you have to get this done,’ and, ‘oh no. This isn't done right. You have to do that.’”

Sanchez, who at age nine moved to Staten Island’s south shore with her mother, recalls being ostracized by her predominately white peers in that neighborhood, which locals say tends to be bigoted towards people of color.

“I don’t believe everyone there is racist, but I do feel there is open racism and it’s OK,” Sanchez says. “Sometimes [growing up] I was just referenced as ‘the black girl.’ It was reconfirmed [after Eric Garner] when I started seeing my south shore friends on Facebook sharing terrible views. I remember feeling really upset about Staten Island as a whole.”

**Activists or ‘terrorists’?**

Members of SIARA PB’s joined fellow Black Lives Matter protestors in Staten Island and the greater New York area over the following days, weeks, and months.
The demonstrations reached a tipping point on Dec. 13, 2014 when an estimated 30,000 Black Lives Matter supporters from across the country participated in the “Millions March” trek that ultimately ended in violence on the Brooklyn Bridge. Two NYPD lieutenants were beaten up, one receiving a broken nose, after they tried to stop a man throwing a garbage can from the bridge’s pedestrian walkway onto officers patrolling the roadway below.

Mayor de Blasio later announced he was working with members of the activist group Justice League NYC to identify and arrest the attackers. Afterwards, some of the more radical Black Lives Matter supporters accused Justice League of being too cozy with the mayor and too willing to work “within the system,” which they charge is institutionally racist and fundamentally corrupt.

The Black Lives Matter cause came under more scrutiny on Dec. 20, 2014 when a disgruntled Ismaaiyl Brinsley, 28, traveled from Baltimore to his Brooklyn hometown and fatally shot NYPD officers Wenjian Liu and Rafael Ramos as they sat eating lunch in their police cruiser outside Bed-Sty’s Tompkins Houses. Hours prior to the shooting, Brinsley posted the following message on his Instagram page:

A post from the Instagram account of cop killer Ismaaiyl Brinsley (Credit: Instagram)

Police and their supporters blamed the “anti-cop” climate created by the Black Lives Matter movement for setting Brinsley on his murderous path.

That, apparently, was the last straw for Yhap’s friend Lucy Cipolla, a guidance counselor at a Staten Island elementary school whose son is a police officer. Yhap says she became friends with Cipolla several years prior
when Yhap’s kids attended Cipolla’s school. Cipolla helped Yhap’s family through some trying times, but that bond was shattered after the Brinsley shooting when Cipolla posted the following message on her own Facebook page:

Cipolla un-friended Yhap and Kirschner the next day and they haven’t spoken since. Cipolla declined to comment on this story.
White faces in a black movement: Why their voices matter — Medium

Mother and activist Jewel Miller poses with her daughter, Legacy Garner, the late-Eric Garner's youngest child. (Credit: NY Daily News)

Yhap lost one Facebook friend, but gained another. Jewel Miller is the mother of Legacy Garner, Eric Garner’s youngest child, who was born three months before he was killed. Miller and Yhap met at protests in December of 2014. They eventually became Facebook friends and confidants.

Miller has joined SIARA PB at several of their protests, including one on July 18, 2015 outside the congressional office of prosecutor-turned U.S. Rep. Dan Donovan, the man many believe deliberately failed to secure a grand jury indictment against Eric Garner's killer.
“Any black person who’s been in the fight for black liberation, we know our history enough to know there have always been white people with genuine hearts who’ve helped us out along the way,” Miller says. “It’s tricky to know who it is, so we have to let their actions speak… If there are white people that are confronting their own people then I believe what they’re doing is great.”

On Oct. 24, SIARA PB members received an award for their activism from the Staten Island affiliate of Peace Action New York State.

**The Black Lives Matter challenge**
Sept. 11 was a milestone night for Stephen Colbert, but Waldo was the one who was nervous. Sharron Paul, one of Waldo's comedian friends, got tickets to that night's taping of “The Late Show with Stephen Colbert,” and asked Patrick to join her.

Weeks earlier, Waldo and his fellow NYC Shut It Down members had bought hundreds of black wristbands and paid to have the words “Black Lives Matter” printed on them, selling them for $5 apiece to raise money for protest supplies.

When he found out he was going to the Colbert taping, Waldo decided to try challenging the comedian to wear one of the wristbands and say “Black Lives Matter” on his show. His new show. In it's fifth episode. Ever.

It was a full house at the storied Ed Sullivan Theatre where before the show's taping Colbert led an audience Q&A session, during which Waldo, who was sitting with Sharron in the last row of the theatre's orchestra section, waived his hands in the air to get Stephen's attention. He was the first person called upon.

“Stephen, I'm a big fan,” Waldo began. “I've been organizing with the Black Lives Matter movement for the last year. I hate to put you on the spot, but I'm going to do it anyway. From one member of the ruling class to another…
“Ruling class?” Colbert interrupted with a chuckle. “What do you rule? Because I rule this theatre.”

The audience laughed.

“You do. You rule this theatre,” Waldo conceded. “In solidarity with the movement, will you wear this Black Lives Matter wristband on the show and say the phrase ‘black lives matter’ on the air?”

Colbert paused to think.

“Well, bring it up,” he replied, motioning for Waldo to run up to the stage before shaking his hand, taking the bracelet and sliding it on his wrist.

“I always want to put thought into everything I do,” Colbert told Waldo. “Let me give it some thought and get back to you.”

Colbert answered a few more questions from the audience before coming back to Waldo several minutes later.

“I’ll try to work it out,” he continued. “If I don’t say the phrase on the show tonight, I will work it into an episode soon. Does that sound OK?”
Waldo graciously agreed.

Colbert wore the bracelet throughout the broadcast, and people watching took notice, pointing it out on Twitter. The incident went viral over the weekend and by Monday, conservative web sites like Breitbart.com and Fox News pundits like Tucker Carlson started railing against Colbert.

“Do you really want to get into this on the first week of your show, one of the most divisive social movements in America?” Carlson opined on the Sunday edition of the cable networks morning show, “Fox and Friends.”

Apparently, Colbert did want to get into it. The next day, he did an entire segment about police brutality, noting that police officers put their lives on
the line doing dangerous jobs with the caveat that “black people aren't just making this stuff up.”

After Waldo's efforts made national news, he started calling the stunt the #BlackLivesMatterWristbandChallenge. He repeated his Late Show gimmick at a taping of “The Nightly Show with Larry Wilmore.”

Actor Matt McGorry has been a vocal Black Lives Matter supporter. (Credit: Matt McGorry)

Around that time, Waldo's old UCB friend, actor Matt McGorry, gave him a call. He was doing promos for the newest season of “How to Get Away with Murder,” and wanted one of Patrick's bracelets.

“To me it felt like a good way to start conversations while minimizing white peoples’ defensiveness,” McGorry says.
The actor, known for playing a law enforcement officer on Netflix’s “Orange is the New Black,” wore the bracelet and discussed Black Lives Matter on several entertainment news segments, including an “Access Hollywood” appearance. He also discussed the many tweets he’s shared over the last year showing support for the movement.

McGorry, who has more than 400,000 Twitter followers, believes most white people don’t support Black Lives Matter because they struggle at empathizing with issues specific to black people.

“It makes you feel like just cause something doesn’t affect you, it’s not really as big a problem as it really is,” he says. “The more articles white people see of their white friends sharing these things, the more they’re going to see that these are way bigger issues than they actually thought they were… if white people don’t make this their problem it’s going to take a lot longer to get better.”

Rise Up

RISE UP FAMILIES1
from Chauncey Alcorn PLUS

Waldo continued pushing celebrities to wear his wristbands, but on Oct. 24,
2015 one of his recruits inadvertently became a sideshow.

Both Waldo and famed film Director Quentin Tarantino were among the thousands gathered that day on the north side of Washington Square Park for the “Rise Up October” anti-police brutality event organized by the Stop Mass Incarceration Network, a grassroots organization led in part by Dr. Cornel West and his close friend Carl Dix, a founding member of the Revolutionary Communist Party.

During the emotional rally, family members whose loved ones were killed by police without any accountability told their tragic stories on stage. Many were being placed in the national spotlight for the first time after seeing so much media attention paid to other police brutality cases. Some became angry when organizers cut their addresses short to begin the march through Midtown.

Tarantino watched it all unfold from backstage. The director also had decided to speak at the rally after seeing headlines of blacks being slain by police for more than a year, but he realized his words weren’t nearly as important as those of the victims’ families.

“I want to give my time to the families that want to talk,” he told the crowd when it was his turn to speak. “However I just do want to say one thing. What am I doing here? I’m here because I am a human being with a conscience! When I see murder, I cannot stand by! I have to call the murdered the murdered and I have to call the murderers the murderers!”

The crowd cheered.

“Now I want to give my time to the families,” he concluded.
Tarantino’s brief statement was the only part of the rally mentioned by most media outlets the following week. Law enforcement advocates like Pat Lynch of the Patrolman’s Benevolent Association accused the director of calling all officers murderers and asked for a boycott of his movies.

“It’s no surprise that someone who makes a living glorifying crime and violence is a cop-hater, too,” Lynch told reporters a day after the rally.

Waldo got a chance to meet Tarantino at the rally and convinced him to wear a Black Lives Matter wristband. He also gave a wristband to actor Michael Rapaport, who attended the event to hear the stories of police brutality for himself. The man famous for playing a skinhead in the 1994 film “Higher Learning,” says growing up in the Big Apple, he routinely saw black people victimized by police.

“The brutality is disgusting,” Rapaport told reporters at the rally. “The reality is black people are being terrorized by bad cops at times. You grow up in New York, you see it. I’ve seen it my whole life first-hand. It’s a scary time, but I think it’s a hopeful time because I think young people are interested in trying to improve the state of things.”
One year later

NYC Shut It Down member Cleo Jeffries listens to Justice League NYC Leader Carmen Perez during a Dec. 4 argument between the two groups at the Eric Garner Bay Street Memorial site in Staten Island. (Credit: Chauncey Alcorn)
They had just finished reciting Assata chant, but apparently the words rang hollow that night.

Nothing Waldo had been through the last 366 days had prepared him for what was about to happen. He and his adopted family had walked hundreds of miles through the streets of New York, “died” dozens of times in intersections and plazas, but it wasn’t as difficult as watching something they’d built together unravel in a matter of minutes.

It all came to a head during Erica’s last speech at her father’s Bay Street memorial site where this whole ordeal began less than 18 months ago.

“Erica, even while you’re talking, everybody’s not listening,” said Justice League NYC member Carlene Pinto. She was referring to two female members of NYC Shut It Down who were standing a few feet away.

“We’re actually talking about the route to the other location,” replied one of the girls.

“Erica’s talking. That’s all I’m saying, sis,” Pinto responded.

Suddenly, the members of the various groups began arguing. Loudly.

The dispute initiated over accusations of rudeness had more to do with each group’s varying philosophies.

Justice League is a subsidiary of The Gathering for Justice, an organization founded by Harry Belafonte, who once marched with Dr. King and promotes a philosophy of “Kingian non violence” preferring to use democratic apparatuses—the voting booth and working with lawmakers—in conjunction with grassroots organizing to achieve social change. Justice League has also had celebrities like NAS and Russell Simmons appear at their events, which annoys other Black Lives Matter organizations that feel Justice League is commercializing and co-opting their movement to achieve diluted reform efforts.

NYC Shut It Down, the Stop Mass Incarceration Network, and Millions March NYC advocate more radical approaches to change. Many of their members who were also supporters of Occupy Wall Street don’t believe in simply working within “the system.” They want to abolish the system.
“Where’s the revolution?!” one of the more radical female protesters shouted during the argument. “We all need a revolution!”

“This kid is confused, man,” said Justice League member Mysonne Linen, a rapper from the Bronx. “She doesn’t know what she’s talking about. I apologize, Erica.”

Erica shook her head as she sat in the middle of a nearby intersection taking a drag from her cigarette and shooting a Periscope on her smartphone.

“This is sad,” she replied. “My family is struggling to get justice and people are arguing.”

Tensions rose even higher minutes later when Linen and Cleo Jeffryes, a female member of NYC Shut It Down, started arguing. Linen was later accused of threatening Jeffryes before redirecting his anger at a male cohort in an exchange caught on video.

The video was given to activist and Huffington Post blogger Josmar Trujillo, who later wrote a blog post about the ordeal.
“Violence against women, and the threat of it, is a crucial method of enforcing the very oppression we are fighting against,” he wrote. “There is a clear divide between the radical organizers on the front lines of the struggle and reformists or would-be members of the establishment who hold closed-door meetings with the likes of Mayor Bill de Blasio.”

Patrick Waldo tries to mediate an argument between activist groups during a Dec. 4 protest. (Credit: Chauncey Alcorn)

At the center of the ordeal was Waldo, who regularly participates in all three groups. After the blow up, Waldo and Justice League Leader Carmen Perez decided he should step down from his position as direct action committee co-lead within that organization.

Carmen blamed Waldo for creating discord between the groups, claiming he’d bad-mouthed Justice League members behind their backs.

“[Waldo] planted the seed, allowed it to grow and continued to feed it,” she said angrily.

She also brought up Patrick’s race.

“You as a white man felt that you were the white savior,” she added. “You actually created more chaos and tension that then led to a blow up between
groups of color… When you’re in spaces with black or brown people and you’re a white man that’s kind of creating chaos, to me that’s kind of where it takes my mind.”

Waldo hasn’t participated with Justice League since the incident, but has continued his work with NYC Shut It Down and other organizations.

“I respect Justice League. I have nothing, but love for them,” he said following the blow up.

While his actions may have rubbed some the wrong way, the impact of Patrick’s presence proves to people like Erica Garner that there is hope for racial reconciliation in America and that at least some white people do believe black lives matter.

“Patrick’s been with me since last year,” Erica adds. “Sometimes during protests it was just me, him, and a couple other people walking back and forth. The dedication from a white, privileged kid from New York City that saw what happened to my dad and encouraged his peers to come out, that says a lot.”