

Interview by Girija Griffin

Do you think raising the Black Lives Matter flag helped the movement? Why? And was it a successful endeavor?

Alex Brush:

I don't-as a white person, I don't know how much I can speak for like the Black Lives Matter movement, but I think it did because it just showed more like, widely shown support and as the first high school in the country I believe to raise the Black Lives Matter flag - It did create a pattern where other high schools started raising the Black Lives Matter flag and it shed more support for bipoc students as well, and it showed just the general support for the movement.

Vivien Thomas:

I agree with what Alex said but like going more on it, I think that yeah, that it did help, but... I don't think that it like I think it just shows that we support that but I don't think that some people are going to change their minds about how they feel about it, because that's just how people are and we can't make them feel, but we want them to feel or change their opinion if that's what they really believe.

So do you think it was more like a symbol of support and less of something that impacted school?

Vivien Thomas

I feel like in a way, yes. But it's not like we're learning a lot about it... we're just kind of going on with our day learning about, like, regular subjects. Like in 'Intro to global citizenship', which is a freshman course. I'm pretty sure yeah, we are learning about like, immigrants and stuff, but that doesn't really have to do with like, people, like black people, like it has to do with people from around the world. Yes, but not about just black people in general in the United States.

Alex Brush:

Yeah, I get where you're coming from, but I also just think, at the time, I definitely think there was a lot more conversation about it 'cause, I was there when they originally raised the Black Lives Matter flag and students spoke about it and their experiences, and I think that did give like a lot more education for people at the time when they did originally raise it.

What do you say to people who might support BLM but don't like the flag on the school flagpole because they think public school should stay out of politics?

Vivian Thomas:

I feel like if they believe that, that they are really like... I feel like it's important for kids to know that black lives do matter. But I feel like people who think that schools should stay out of politics, that they're, they're wrong because eventually we're all going to be talking about politics and stuff and we're older and so it's greater, it's better to have a greater understanding before actually talking about it.

So what do you hope for concerning the Black Lives Matter movement to show up both locally and in our school system, like in our town versus school system?

Alex Brush:

Um, I think we've seen a lot of (in the school system), a lot of change with the RJ Racial Justice Alliance, just having that space and having a space for bipoc people on Fridays and stuff and having a white ally space as well just to learn about how to be a better ally. And I think we've began to move in the right direction, but while creating these spaces, it also creates a space for us to move more in the direction we need to go, and so I hope, as a school system and as a town, we continue to raise bipoc voices and to listen to them and to, to to like, actually validate them on like, how it's been in the past with just... racism.

Vivian Thomas:

I agree with what Alex said. But like, in the community, I think it still needs to be raised a little more, because the I've definitely experienced racism in the community, not like largely, but a few times I

have, which shouldn't happen especially as like a teenager-slash-child. And it's not fair to be discriminated against because of your skin tone. You can't help what you look like.

Do you have any specific experiences that show the fact that change that it's more of that was a temporary symbol kind of, is that what I'm hearing, that it had more of a temporary impact on the school system?

Vivian Thomas:

I feel like in the beginning we were all talking about it and that, like, hey, all people do matter. Like people who aren't from your matter, like people in general just matter. But soon it kind of wore off, and we're just going back to our regular curriculums.

Alex Brush:

I've also definitely seen racism in the school.... I don't know. I feel like I might - I don't notice it as much as a white person just because I'm not affected by it, personally, but I have seen people say racist stuff and wear, racist caricatures of Mexican people. And just generally I feel like it was a big deal, but like Vivian said, it also just created some, like, it's not erased from MHS, the race against racism, like it's still...

Vivian Thomas:

...it's always going to be there. It might not be as much but it's always going to be there.