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Off-Campus Feature Writing

According to a study in the Journal of Pediatrics, “African American children have the highest rates of firearm mortality overall.” Being 10 times more likely to be killed by gun violence than white children, this drastic statistic is the reality for the 14% African American population in the United States.

Naomi Wadler, an 11-year-old girl, and her friend Carter led a march out of her elementary school on the 14th of March along with many other young activists in the United States participating in the gun-violence protests taken by storm across the nation since the recent shooting in South Florida this past February.

“We walked out for 18 minutes adding a minute to honor Courtlin Arrington an African-American girl who was a victim of gun violence in her school in Alabama after the Parkland shooting. I am here today to represent Courtlin Arrington,” Wadler speaks out.

The 17 victims of the Parkland shooting, however, have not been the only ones affected by gun violence in 2018. Courtlin Arrington, 17, was also a victim of gun violence in a Huffman High School shooting in Alabama.

This past Saturday on the 24th of March 2018, the March for Our Lives rally in Washington, D.C hosted Wadler as a representative of the African-American community concerned about being seen as a statistic in the eyes of American people.

“I am here today to acknowledge and represent the African-American girls whose stories don’t make the front page of every national newspaper, whose stories don’t lead on the evening news,” she says.

The frustration amongst the minority community is becoming more evident through the times of political activism in the sphere of social media. The casualty of Courtlin Arrington as a victim of gun violence was not broadcasted on national media with the urgency of the Parkland shooting coverage.

Instead, Arrington’s murder became another statistic in a sociological context; where its incident contributes to the data of less wealthy Americans, minorities, neighborhoods, and communities.

The Parkland shooting was shocking not only because of the situation of the victims and arms used but also because of the context of the neighborhood the crime took place in. Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School is located in one of Florida’s safest cities, ranked third on The National Council for Home Safety and Security list in 2018.

However, the massacres of individuals such as Shaima Alawadi in 2012 who was found beaten with a tire iron in her California home, or the recent Austin bombing on March 2018 that took the lives of two African-American men and one Hispanic woman were also not as intensely covered by national media.

These voices are becoming louder and louder; the March For Our Lives protests took the country by storm on March 24th, 2018 as activists participated nationwide in Washington D.C, South Florida, New York City, Dallas, and other areas around the country. In Washington D.C alone, over 200,000 people were present in the nation’s capital.

Wadler ended her speech by saying, “For far too long, these names, these black girls, and women, have been just numbers. I’m here to say ‘Never again,’ for those girls too. I’m here to say that everyone should value those girls too.”