

# Black Lives Matter Rally Gathers in Downtown Santa Barbara

Santa Barbara High School students organize event to support of the Black Lives Matter movement, push for inclusion of Ethnic Studies classes in local schools

[Noozhawk](#)

Surrounded by community members, Casmali Lopez told more than 150 Black Lives Matter supporters at a Santa Barbara rally Thursday that the world will see a change once every citizen understands the oppression of their neighbor and the power of solidarity and mutual aid.

“As long as racism and oppression are taught as a thing in the past in our school system, as something that has ended in suffrage and civil rights movement, we will struggle to gain the critical amount of support required for large-scale systematic change,” said Lopez, a 15-year-old Santa Barbara High School student.

“Black lives do not yet matter. Because they are shot in the streets we need mandatory Ethnic Studies (in education).”



Students from [Santa Barbara High School](#) organized a Black Lives Matter rally to support those who are mourning the shooting deaths of black men and women across the country, and promoting solidarity in the movement protesting police brutality.

“We must never forget the lives that have died for no reason,” Lopez said.

Locals gathered at De La Guerra Plaza with signs and took to the street to voice change, ending with a march down State Street.

“It starts with the younger generation, we have the whole world in our hands,” said Sage Gaspar, who organized the rally. “We are trying to achieve healing as everyone is left in shock of the recent events that keep happening.”



The rally was organized to start critical thinking and show support as a community that demands change, said Gaspar, a 17-year-old senior at SBHS.

“I think we are fortunate enough not to have such a big problem with police brutality” in Santa Barbara, she said.



Santa Barbara High School students organized a rally in support of the Black Lives Matter movement Thursday. (Brooke Holland / Noozhawk photo)

Gaspar is the leader of the high school’s chapter of [Ethnic Studies Now](#), a chapter of a statewide organization dedicated to making Ethnic Studies a curriculum for Santa Barbara high schools.



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“There’s a lot of room to make progress. It’s about getting the students and community to question what is happening,” Gaspar said. “We are trying to make the city aware of the issues.”

On Tuesday afternoon, 38-year-old Alfred Olango was shot and killed in a confrontation with officers behind a Mexican restaurant in downtown El Cajon, about 16 miles northeast of San Diego.

In August 2014, Michael Brown was shot and killed by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, and the act spurred protests nationwide in the movement that began with the killing of Trayvon Martin, a black teenager, who shot to death in 2012 by neighborhood watch volunteer George Zimmerman, according to the [BLM website](#).

The gathering Thursday was a response to the lives lost, organizers said.

A poster for Civil Grand Jurors. It features a cartoon illustration of a man with glasses and a suit holding a magnifying glass. The text reads: "Civil Grand Jurors Needed! Make a difference in our community and volunteer to serve on the 2020-21 Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury. Applications due Friday, May 1st Don't let this opportunity pass you by— Volunteer Today! Applications are available at: www.sbcourts.org & www.sbcgj.org 1100 Anacapa Street, Santa Barbara ~ 805-882-4530 312 E. Cook St. Bldg. F, Santa Maria ~ 805-614-6464".

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Speaker Akila Simone thanked the youth and community at the event.

“Yesterday I was down and lost,” Simone said. “Each of these situations, incidents and killings have disturbed my spirit to the point where I have a text message saved in my phone to send to each of my black and brown family members and friends, to say ‘I saw this, it disturbed my spirit. Are you OK, where are you at?’”

Students from UCSB, Santa Barbara City College and members from the [Pacific Pride Foundation](#) also joined the rally to show support.

“We must, in all context, de-escalate and destroy our deeply ingrained biases that leave black lives lost and community members of color lost,” said Patrick Lyra Kearns, a LGBTQ and outreach advocate at Pacific Pride Foundation.

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