

Joining Forces

As a TV NEWS CAMERAMAN in Cincinnati, I covered the street violence following the fatal shooting of an unarmed black man by a white police officer last April. On the morning of the man's funeral, I was assigned to a prayer march intended to ease tension. Hundreds of marchers had gathered at a local school, and I began to film them as they set off.

Then a call came in from the newsroom. "Get over to the District One Police Headquarter!" The police had fired rubber bullets to disperse a turbulent mob. Several people had been injured, and now angrier than ever, the protestors were again on the move. I sped to the scene. Police officers in full riot gear followed people as they surged through the streets shouting with their fists raised, "No, Justice! No Peace!"

I walked backward, filming the crowd, then heard singing coming from my right. What now? I turned and saw that the prayer marchers were heading in our direction. The two groups were on a collision course blacks, whites, peaceful protestors and angry one. What would happen when they all met? Somebody was bound to get hurt or killed.

"No justice, no peace!" cried the protestors, while the prayer marchers sang "Our God Is an Awesome God." Grant us peace, Lord, Cover us all with your spirit, I prayed.

The next moment, the two groups merged and quickly turned north onto a larger thoroughfare. I kept my camera rolling, but from behind the lens I became aware of an amazing thing. The angry shouts were fading away. The singing was growing louder and louder. The protestors had joined the prayer marchers. Block after block, the singing swelled, the tension calmed. Soon, more than a thousand people were clapping their hands and singing songs of praise. Yes, justice. Yes, peace, And prayer.

-Michael Buckingham
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