

Voices of BIPOC youth from the Amherst 9.

“Our “rights” were taken away on 7/5/2022. I never thought I would hear those words in this area from our police.”

“I listened to the police when they said we couldn’t talk, had no rights, could not use our phones, could not call our guardians and/or parents and so I just didn’t move, didn’t speak, and complied to not make anything worse.”

“I’ve been taught that if I speak respectfully with police it’s ok to ask questions... well I thought I could but I did not dare to and I was confused on why I could not call my home and I did not dare speak up to ask anything.”

“Will I always be punished because I have a tint to my skin and now even more with me speaking up will we need to now be fearful of retaliation from the police?”

“I am not looking for any trouble. I just want to live peacefully.”

“Am I safe to walk alone or with anyone really?”

“Now anxiety plays a major part of my life because of police making me feel unsafe.”

“I worry if I’m ok to go anywhere especially alone. I worry for my friends. I worry about how much the experiences with the Amherst police has taken from my concentration on school and my studies because my safety and being of color was something I thought I would not have to worry about in this area.”

“To what degree am I to be of concern for my safety?”

“I was at my friend’s house and came outside. I saw sirens. I saw my friend get questioned by the police. My friends who were in a parked vehicle at a parking spot had a flashlight shown at them. They were told to exit the truck and sit on the curb with the rest of us.”

“I started to record the altercation. I did this in case the police said we did something wrong. If I had a run in with the police I would hope someone would record it too. If anything happened it would be on video. Anything could have happened.”

“The police were yelling, power tripping. They were yelling we were detained. They were yelling we had no rights.”

“Being detained technically means you are not allowed to leave. No one had the courage to leave. The fear of the police is instilled in us.”

“My heart was racing. I was scared. I had no rights. I didn’t know what to think. I felt lost. I didn’t know who I could look to for safety and security in a time of distress.”

“Our emotions were at an all-time high.”

“Nothing good comes from the police. My view of the Amherst police is that they are up to no good and are looking to cause problems. I know this from experience.”

“Toward the end of the encounter, I thought we would be free to go but they had us call our parents. We couldn’t just go on about our business. We had to continue to do as they said. We were not free to leave on our own accord. My friend’s mom had to take me home.”

“If I complain they may come after my family. I don’t want that negative attention. I feel I am stuck. I want something to happen but I want to protect my family at the same time.”

“I keep busy to not think about what happened to us. But it doesn’t work.”

“We talk or think about this incident almost everyday because we see the police everyday.”

“I am a student who has lived in Amherst my whole life basically. Outside of school and studies next comes sports and family then friends. I have never been one who wants or causes trouble.”

“I have been taught that I could trust the Amherst police to call on if an emergency or in need of help. That’s been taken away from me by the Amherst police.”

“There has been more than a few times police has made me feel less than.”

“I have overtime wondered what did I do wrong to be treated as if I’m some hoodlum? I stay respectful and I know I’m not doing anything wrong. So why? Even though I have tried to see otherwise I can’t help but see a common denominator every time... color and race.”

“I do as I’m told and even though respect is not reciprocated I still am humble, give and show respect and follow directions when encountered by the Amherst police as well as in general. That’s how I was raised. It’s instilled in me.”

“This incident doesn’t surprise me, I’ve been questioned by the police before for things I am not involved in.”

“When I was in middle school, my friends and I were in front of the firehouse next to CVS waiting for other friends to join us after getting their food. The police had us go inside the CVS. They were responding to a call about a theft at the CVS. They said they wanted to see if any one of us matched the description of the suspect. They had us go inside of CVS to compare each one of us to surveillance camera footage inside the store. When a girl in our group identified the person who was white, the police just said nothing was going to happen to him and he should just return the item. The police didn’t call our parents then. Nothing came out of this incident and my friends and I continue to have bad experiences with the police.”