

# High Noon at the Emmaus Triangle: “I love you” . . . “I love you, too”

The Bethlehem Gadfly George Floyd killing, Police August 2, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts about responses to the George Floyd killing* 

*From Kayla Dwyer, “Black Lives Matter activists silently protest at ‘pro-Trump/Back the Blue’ rally in Emmaus, where tensions rose but settled.” Morning Call, August 1, 2020.*

Not long after the two groups assembled in the center of Emmaus at high noon Saturday, one occupying most of the Triangle and the other a corner of it, they came face to face.

Those who gathered in the Emmaus Triangle for a pro-Trump/Back the Blue/pro-Second Amendment event turned their attention toward Black Lives Matter activists staging a silent protest. At the height of the tension, the Trump supporters, many of them visibly armed and maskless, stood within a few feet of the Black Lives Matter protesters and lobbed insults at them: “stupid kids,” “Marxists,” “move to another country.”

Apart from one or two activists who shouted back, most stood in silence behind signs that read “No Justice No Peace,” “Hate has no home here,” and “Are we Great yet? Black Lives Matter.”

As the scene played out, Jerone Darden of Bethlehem performed a Native American smudging ceremony, burning sage to purge the air of negative energy and bring forth the positive.

At least 200 people filled the Triangle, the pro-Trump crowd double the size of the Black Lives Matter group. Never did the tension boil over. That was how organizers of both groups wanted it.

Before the event, they agreed to keep the peace. Brendan Schoepflin, who organized the Trump supporters, said he carried a rifle there, as he did [to a pro-police rally outside Allentown City Hall](#) Wednesday, for protection in case things erupted.

When Ed DeGrace, donning a Black Lives Matter T-shirt, asked Garrett Boyer, who was wearing a military helmet, why he brought a gun to a peaceful protest, Boyer said he was in the Army and, “I needed this weapon two months ago when I was stationed in Philadelphia getting Molotov cocktails thrown at me.”

Ron Sell, a lifelong Emmaus resident, attended the pro-Trump rally. He has a permit to carry a concealed weapon but said he’s never used a gun and hopes not to.

“I have no hate toward them,” he said, referring to the Black Lives Matter protesters. “If they had guns, I wouldn’t mind.”

As the rallies wound down, individuals from opposing groups splintered off into civil one-on-one conversations.

Alex O’Neill, a recent Emmaus High School graduate from the Black Lives Matter group, and Ron Paul Jr., sporting a Trump T-Shirt, spoke at length about corporations controlling politics, extremists on both ends of the political spectrum and the need to weed them out.

“Hey, I love you,” Paul told O’Neill as he left. O’Neill chuckled and said, “I love you, too.”