



## Stand

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*“Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.” (Ephesians 6:13)*

“Did you see Justin Jones?” A member of the congregation I pastor asked me. His speech after being expelled from the Tennessee legislature for standing with protestors in the wake of yet another mass shooting excited and inspired her. “I’m so proud of him,” she stated over and over again in the same voice she uses when speaking of her beloved grandchildren. She also told me she wanted to find a protest march she could join to express her solidarity and support.

A couple of days later, on Easter Monday, I went to take a walk by Lake Erie. Drawn by the beauty of the day and ideal weather, I looked forward to the peace and energy I expected to find there. Instead, when I pulled into the parking lot, I noticed multiple police vehicles. Seven or eight officers surrounded a man around his car. While I could not hear what was said on either part, I felt anxiety as a solitary African American man was surrounded by so many officers who encircled him. A young white woman rode past me on her bike yelling, “Why do you have to be so racist?” Several people in the park (of varying racial identities) stood nearby; some held up their phones recording the encounter. A white man, who appeared to be middle aged, stood closest to the unfolding encounter. He did not have his phone out, and he was not speaking to anyone. He just stood there with his arms folded over his chest.

Feeling torn, conflicted, and disrupted, I took my walk. My path was circular. As a result, I could observe the interaction continue. After a half-hour, I was about to get back into my car, but I could not leave. I stood among the others assembled. The young woman was still riding her bike, groups were still recording, and others had come and gone. A tow truck

was called, and the man was collecting his items from the vehicle before it was taken away. He moved more slowly than one officer liked, but the officer closest to him was calm and mostly silent as frustration gave way to angry speech from the man who had apparently fallen asleep in his car. I don't know why they towed it, and I don't care. I imagined that he probably came to the lake for a bit of peace like I had, and his day, and likely those ahead, had been ruined.

He was free to go, but he had to walk away. He did. The car was towed away, and I got in my car. While pulling off, I noticed that solitary white man still standing in the same spot he had been in for at least forty-five minutes by my count.

Sometimes, standing is the only act of solidarity required. Justin Pearson [posted on social media](#), "Here is the letter I sent to every TN House member yesterday taking accountability for not following decorum & also explaining why it was important for us to speak up and not remain silent as thousands chanted and marched to end gun violence!" He and his colleagues, Justin Jones and Gloria Johnson, used their power to support their constituents. That solitary man used his privilege and stood as a visible witness. Sometimes, you have to search for the protest, and sometimes, the protest finds you. Stand.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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