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A Photo-narrative

Julian Plowden

In Summer 2014, I attended a rally for Michael Brown at the Atlanta CNN center. I was curious to see what a civil rights march would be like because I'd only seen them in movies and couldn't imagine what to actually expect. When I arrived in downtown Atlanta to the march, I saw crowds of people — news reports said there were at least five thousand — gathered at the steps of the CNN center. Initially I just wanted to listen to the great speakers on the microphone in front of the crowds but the more I listened and watched, the more I thought that this moment should be captured for memory. The crowd, the rain, the speeches — I'd never seen anything like it and even though I was only an amateur student photographer compared to the professional news teams I saw there, I felt like my perspective mattered enough to capture nonetheless. At least the photos would help me remember the historical event.
A portrait of local youth leader, Aurielle Marie, who was only 19-years old at the time, speaking to the crowd. One of the surprises I did not expect to see was the amount of women, young people and diversity at the rally. Different religions, families and ages came together — even high schoolers were brave enough to speak on the megaphone about their concerns for justice in America.

Students came out with signs asking if they were next to be unfairly targeted by racial discrimination.
A little girl sits on a man’s shoulders — presumably her father — while raising her hands and chanting along with protesters. This photo was used a year later as the cover for Creative Loafing, Atlanta issue discussing the progress made since the 2014 Ferguson protests.

Ralliers filled up the streets surrounding Centennial Olympic Park, some too far away to even hear the megaphone against the windy weather — but all still acted in unison.
Almost as soon as the crowd decided to march, loud cracks of thunder began to ring across the sky, and it started to pour immediately.

Protesters fighting to keep their balance during the storm.
Almost too ironic, the crowd marches round the park and in front of the recently built National Center for Civil and Human Rights building. It is a visual representation of the progress made since the civil rights movement of the 1960s and captures the feelings of people fifty years later.

Drenched from the rain, protestors finished the march around Centennial Olympic Park with arms linked. Finally, the storm began to clear.