

# Jade Merriwether

HOLDING A GIANT MEGAPHONE, Jade Merriwether leads a crowd of more than 500 people on a cold November evening in downtown Iowa City. Together, they chant the message, "Love Trumps Hate."

Her face has been splashed across local newspapers, on social media and on ABC's *The View*. It all started two days after the presidential election, when Merriwether and a couple of friends organized a student gathering in front of West High. The students expressed their feelings about the outcome of the election.

"I'm not the type to be able to let problems sit," she said. "If there is a problem out there, I can't just not do something about it—especially when it affects a lot of the people that I love and care about. I feel like it's my obligation, my social duty, to give back to the community that brought me up."

That willingness to take a stand didn't happen overnight. "It took awhile for me to build the courage to do that," she said. "But once you get involved, little by little, one thing leads to another, and you're just out here 24/7 grindin'."

As a result of these protests, a student organization was formed to fight hate and discrimination, SAHD.

"I'm proud of SAHD, honestly. I'm so proud of everything

we've done. We've gone from local to national attention, and that's not something to happen to every other high school or every other group," she said.

Besides supporting the movement, Merriwether loves music. She's involved in show choir and curricular choir, plays guitar to boot and concocts her own rap.

"I've always been into music," she said. "I've had my guitar since 2012. I love her. Her name is Gloria. I think I'm gonna get her name engraved on the neck of it."

"Everybody says this," she continued, "but music is a form of expression. And it helps me gain clarity about a lot of things ... It helps me pinpoint what I'm feeling and either express it or take it in and just meditate on it."

Having attended seven schools in 12 years, Merriwether said she has experienced a great deal of cultural shock.

"I went from being the only black girl out of 300 students in my elementary school to being one of like 600 black kids in my school. So it was very different, and I had to make adjustments," she said. "But I think that's part of the reason I understand things the way that I do ... I like to be an accepting person."

Being raised in a single-parent household has impacted her, too.

"It wasn't easy growing up with just one parent around because it was just a lot of responsibility on us as kids, my brother and I," she said. "I'd say we still lived a fun-filled life and lived fearlessly, and we always have fun together."

"Being around my family influenced a lot of the things that I believe in and my beliefs about people's rights and doing what's right," she said. "Coming from, like, sort of a rough background helped strengthen me as a person."

Her mother, whom Merriwether calls her "rock," has influenced how she views the world.

"It makes me realize, not only how difficult it is but what kind of person you have to be to do something like that," she said. "To not give up on your kids and also to chase your education at the same time."

Merriwether looks up to her mother as a role model. "I want to be healthy—mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually. Everything," she said. "I want to make some changes to this country and this world. And I want to help others achieve the same thing. I want to be alive. I want to live. I don't wanna survive, I want to live."

—By Diaba Keita

# seniors



Nolan Maurer  
Connor McCaffery



Erin McCain  
Kalen McCain



Casey McClenathan  
Anaya McCutcheon  
Breyton McDole  
Isabel McDonald  
Molly McGoldrick  
Katie McGrane



Ian McKay  
Bridget McKenna  
Caitlyn McKenna  
Nicholas McKillip  
Ashley McMahan  
Logan McNeal



Marissa Meade  
Jade Merriwether  
Rachel Meyer  
Carson Miller  
Nicholas Mirabito  
Abdalrman Mohamed



Ala Mohamed  
Brett Molina  
Mary Mondanaro  
Annie Mons  
Susan Mons  
Michael Moonjely

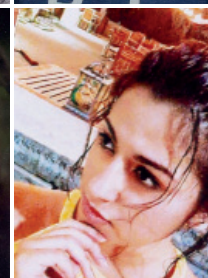
Nathaniel Lang  
Nicole Lange  
Carter LeaVesseur  
Stephanie LeBlanc  
Gabrielle Lee  
Seokwon (John) Lee



Seungjin Lee  
Shea Lewis  
Lydia Leyden  
Jia Ying Lin  
Joseph Lin  
Zachary Logsden



Akaya Lokas  
Sarah Longmire  
Chris Low  
Lily Lucas  
Zayetzy Luna Garcia  
Alex Lynch



Natalie Lynxwiler  
Dontae Lyvers  
Andre Magalhaes  
Oliver Martin  
Laudia Martinez  
Elaina Martz



Not pictured: Yiming Liu, Christopher Mallard, Roza Mamona, Hezekiah Martin-Solis.

Not pictured: Emily Mergenthaler, Isabel Miene, Jeanneth (Abigail) Miranda.

120 PEOPLE

SENIORS 121

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