

**HEADLINE: Dominique Liu-Sang had to find her voice. Now, she speaks for those without one.**

On May 31, 2020, Dominique Liu-Sang found herself in a situation she would have never envisioned just a week prior.

Following the murder of George Floyd, Liu-Sang helped [mediate heated verbal exchanges](#) between the citizens of Lincoln, Nebraska and the city's police department. By the end of the night, Liu-Sang had been tear-gassed, cuffed in zip ties and arrested for failing to observe an 8 p.m. curfew.

When she was released from jail the very next day, Liu-Sang came back determined. On June 1, she helped establish the Black Leaders Movement alongside a group of nine other motivated black youth.

Liu-Sang's arrest – and the community she found in the aftermath – helped launch a year's worth of community activism.

"I didn't know anyone who was really like me here in Nebraska, but seeing the protests let me realize that I'm not alone," Liu-Sang said. "I'm not alone here in Lincoln, Nebraska with my black identity and my pain and hurt for not just George Floyd and his family, but for the entire black, brown and indigenous community."

Liu-Sang's work for the Black Leaders Movement focuses on education and public outreach, while other members work on financial equality, queer rights, legislation and mental health. For Liu-Sang, that meant that the past few months have included a swath of public rallies on issues such as sexual assault and domestic violence, marijuana, healthcare and LGBTQ+ rights.

Considering Liu-Sang spent years living in small towns across the country such as Friend, Nebraska (pop. 1,176) where black people are few and far between, the past year has been one of personal growth.

"If anyone who knew me from protesting knew me three years ago, they would be like, 'there's no way this girl was out here talking about racism when she lived in a small town in Montana,'" Liu-Sang said. "That's because I was suffering in silence."

Liu-Sang is silent no more.

Instead, she's found strength in talking about these issues, because [the 85% of Lincoln's population](#) that is white has been forced to pay attention. Whether it was the June protests against police brutality or more recent rallies supporting mental health and marijuana initiatives, Liu-Sang considers herself thankful to have a public voice.

"I hear a lot of different stories, and there's a privilege of being able to speak, because a lot of people aren't able to voice their pain and hurt," Liu-Sang said. "So, when I hold a rally, any kind

of rally, I think of the people in my head, and I think of particular people that I'm voicing their silence.”

Change may happen slowly, but it often occurs via legislation, and that’s what motivated Liu-Sang to run for an at-large seat on the Lincoln City Council. When Liu-Sang saw a local businessowner running for city council on the platform of ending the city’s mask mandate, she realized could have a platform to bring attention to racial injustice.

Indeed, Liu-Sang’s candidacy [garnered plenty of attention](#) online, where [many commenters](#) seemed unable to reckon with a 21-year-old black woman seeking political office in Nebraska.

“I would sit there and read the comments, and people really didn't like me,” Liu-Sang said. “They would read it and be like, ‘protester, UNL student, black farmer, don’t put her anywhere near any of us.’ People were saying I should die, people were saying I don't deserve to be a politician and I'm like, dude, you guys are racist.”

The campaign may not have resulted in a city council seat, but that’s no bother to Liu-Sang. Rather, she hoped that her campaign would help more young people become aware of local government and their ability to enact change.

Holding politicians accountable on both the national and local level is how Liu-Sang hopes to create a better future. The Black Leaders Movement also continues to host community events such as back to school drives and voter registration events that promote awareness against racism and systematic oppression.

One year ago, Dominique Liu-Sang was just finding her voice.

Now, there’s no topic that she won’t take on.

“Black youth are literally holding up the entirety of black suffering and trying to turn it into something that is voiced so other people don't have to suffer in silence,” Liu-Sang said. “Something I always emphasize is that you’re not alone.”