

Excerpt from “A black protester hugged a white nationalist outside Richard Spencer’s talk. ‘Why do you hate me?’, he asked”

Mary Hui, Washington Post, October 20, 2017

Wearing a white T-shirt emblazoned with swastikas, Randy Furniss, hands in his pockets, walked slowly through a crowd Thursday that had largely gathered to protest white nationalist Richard Spencer, who was delivering a speech at the University of Florida.

“Go home, Nazi scum!” the crowd chanted, jeering at Furniss, of Idaho.

Suddenly, an individual in a green hoodie punched Furniss in the face, before quickly disappearing into the crowd. Furniss recoiled, but carried on walking. Blood trickled from his lip down his chin.

Then something unexpected happened.

A man went up to Furniss and gave him a hug, wrapping one arm around the Nazi’s shoulders, and another arm around his shaved head.

“Why don’t you like me, dog?” the man asked Furniss.

The man, identified by the New York Daily News as Aaron Courtney, is a 31-year-old high school football coach in Gainesville. He said he wanted to show Furniss some love. The hug may have been a small act, but Courtney thinks it can speak volumes.

“It’s a step in the right direction. One hug can really change the world. It’s really that simple,” he said.

Furniss, a self-described white nationalist, explained his views to News4Jax.

“They want what we have. And we just want them to shut up and get on with life,” Furniss said. “They’re being raised up and it’s getting to the point where they want to push us down. That’s not right.”

Courtney hadn’t originally planned on attending the protest. But he was surprised when he received a state of emergency notification on Monday, ahead of Spencer’s planned appearance, the Daily News reported.

“I found out about what kind of person he was and that encouraged me, as an African-American, to come out and protest,” Courtney said. “Because this is what we’re trying to avoid. It’s people like him who are increasing the distance . . . between people.”

Courtney was about to leave the protest, having already spent almost four hours at the scene, when he saw Furniss causing a scene in the crowd, the Daily News reported.

“I had the opportunity to talk to someone who hates my guts and I wanted to know why. During our conversation, I asked him, ‘Why do you hate me? What is it about me? Is it my skin color? My history? My dreadlocks?’” he said.

Courtney repeatedly asked Furniss for an answer, only to be met with silence and a blank look. Exasperated, Courtney asked Furniss for a hug. He was initially reluctant, but as Courtney reached over the third time, Furniss reciprocated, wrapping his arms around Courtney.

“And I heard God whisper in my ear, ‘You changed his life,’” Courtney said.

“Why do you hate me?” Courtney asked Furniss one last time.

“I don’t know,” Furniss finally answered, Courtney said.

For Courtney, that was a good enough answer.

“I believe that was his sincere answer. He really doesn’t know,” Courtney said.

Excerpt from “Footage of Mother Scolding Son During Baltimore Riots Goes Viral”

Meena Jang, Hollywood Reporter, April 28, 2015

Violent rioting continues to overwhelm the streets of Baltimore, Maryland following Monday’s funeral for Freddie Gray, an African-American man who died while in police custody, but one woman is making sure her family stays away from it.

Video footage of the ongoing riots shot by WMAR surfaced on Tuesday, showing a mother scolding her teenage son for apparently participating in the public protests. The woman, who reportedly caught her son throwing rocks at police on live television, can be seen repeatedly slapping the teen while asking, “You want to be out here doing this dumb shit? Get the f--- over here.”

The mother demands that her son, who is dressed in all-black attire, take off his face mask and hood as she angrily drags him away from the scene.

Excerpt from “Baltimore mom who smacked son during riots:

‘I don’t want him to be a Freddie Gray’”

CBS News, April 28, 2015

The Baltimore mother caught on video repeatedly smacking her son after catching him participating in rioting in Baltimore told CBS News that she was only concerned about protecting him.

“He gave me eye contact. And at that point, you know, not even thinking about cameras or anything like that. That’s my only son and at the end of the day I don’t want him to be a Freddie Gray,” Toya Graham said, referencing the 25-year old man who died after mysteriously sustaining severe spinal injuries in police custody earlier in the month. His death has sparked protests throughout the city, with tensions boiling over Monday.

Graham told CBS News she launched into action after spotting her 16-year-old son Michael wearing a hoodie and mask amid the protesters.

“At that point, I just lost it,” said Graham. “I was shocked, I was angry, because you never want to see your child out there doing that.”

**Excerpt from “Baltimore Protests: What Smacked Baltimore Teen
Has to Say About His Mom”**

Steve Osunsami and Meghan Keneally, ABC News, April 30, 2015

The teenage boy publicly shamed when his mom smacked him around at the Baltimore riots this week said he knows she “really cares about me.”

A video shows Michael Singleton being dragged from the protests and whacked by his mother, Toya Graham, after she saw him on television and recognized a key piece of clothing.

“What caught my eye was his sweatpants,” she told ABC News. “Even though he had on all black, I knew those sweatpants he had on, they had a stripe on the side of it and then his eye contact met mine. And I knew that was my son.”

Though he was visibly annoyed and tried brushing off his mom in the video that has now gone viral, the 16-year-old recognizes that she was just looking out for him.

“I’m like, ‘Oh man! What is my momma doing down here?’” Michael told ABC News, laughing while thinking back to the moment his mom nabbed him Monday afternoon.

“All my friends know my mother. Every time they see her they’re like, ‘Toya coming.’ Oh, yeah she’s coming. Everybody better get straight,” he said.

He added: “I understand how much my mother really cares about me. I just got to try to do better.”

Despite some criticism that she went too far with the corporal punishment, Graham has been widely praised as a hero and an example of good parenting by taking control of her son, who said he wasn’t planning on going out on the afternoon of Freddie Gray’s funeral but his friends convinced him. Gray died this month with unexplained injuries after being taken into police custody, prompting protests in Baltimore and elsewhere.

“To see him down there, doing what he was doing, we’re not doing that,” Graham said.

“I’m not angry with him anymore. As long as I have breath in my body, you will not be on the streets, selling drugs, you just not going to live like that.”