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## Chicagoans marching united in protest over murder of George Floyd

June 6, 2020

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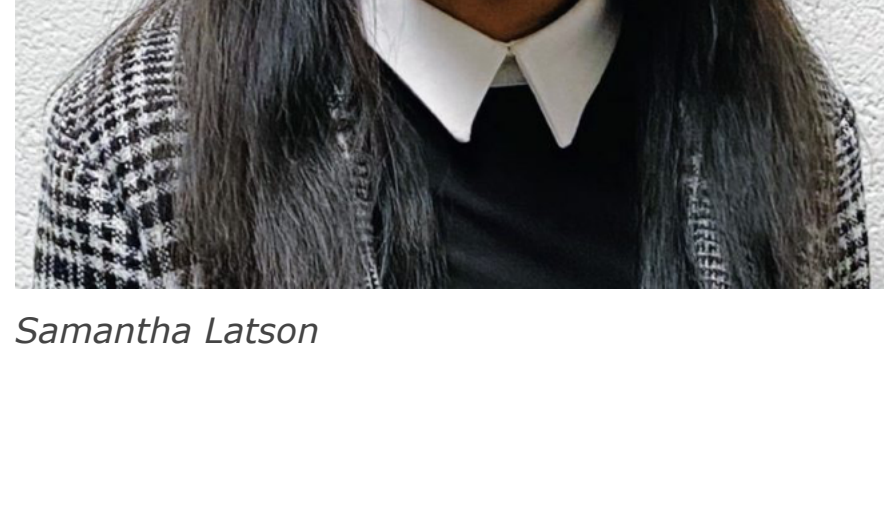
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Protesters wave signs in downtown Chicago as they march on Lake Shore Drive temporarily shutting it down

### THE RONA REPORT | STORIES OF BLACK RESILIENCE

By Samantha Latson



Samantha Latson

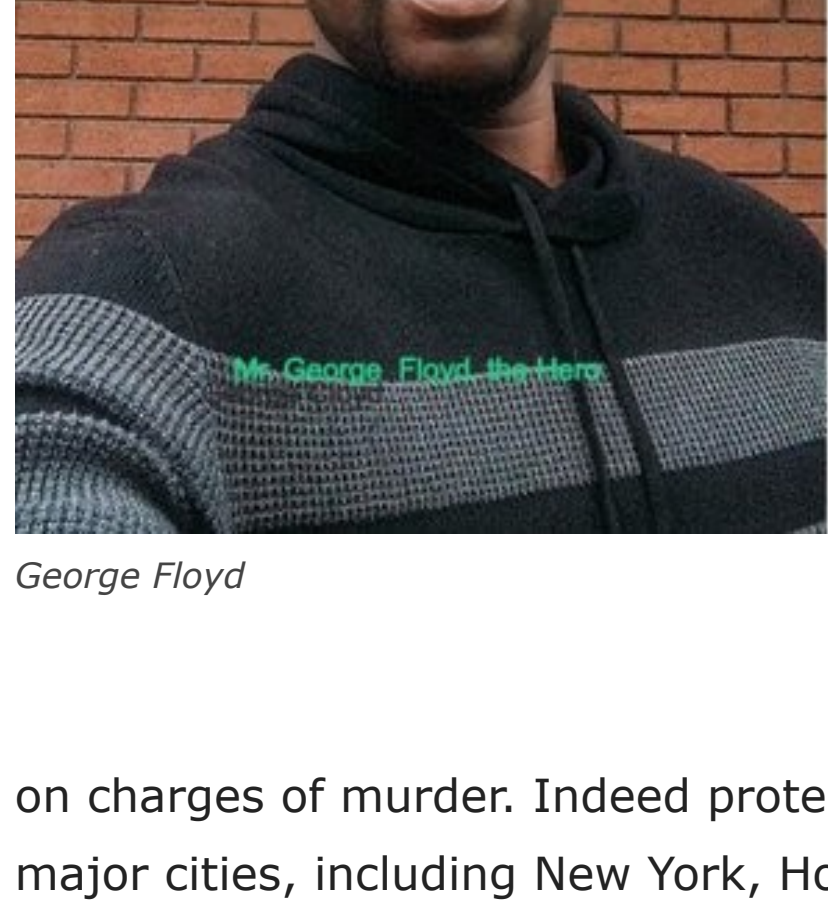
Loud cries and chants filled downtown Chicago streets, voices of a new generation lifting toward the skyscrapers in this town where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once marched for freedom and equality, which for African Americans nationwide remains an American dream.

"Say their names," protestors chanted. "Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery..."

Men, women, even children marched through the streets with shouts of: "No justice, no peace!" and "Black Lives Matter!"

Most of the crowd of estimated hundreds this past weekend that flowed from Federal Plaza to Michigan Avenue and the Magnificent Mile as well as to other Loop streets were young people—white, Black and brown—who echoed a united call for change.

There's is an unwavering call for equality and justice, one that indeed has ignited across the country like wildfire in the wake of George Floyd's death. And with funeral services continuing this weekend for Floyd, the African-American man who died on May 25, saying, "I can't breathe" and with the knee of a Minneapolis police officer on his neck, the call for justice and protests are likely to continue for days, if not weeks.



George Floyd

Millennials of all races united in protests sparked by what many are calling the murder of Floyd, 46, who died while now former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin pressed his knee against his neck.

Chauvin, who is white, has been charged with 3<sup>rd</sup>-degree murder and manslaughter, although three other officers, also at the scene and who are seen on a video either holding Floyd down or standing idly by while Chauvin presses his knee against Floyd's neck, have not been charged. All four of the now former officers were fired.

Protestors calling for an end to police violence against Blacks also seek the arrest of the three other officers on charges of murder. Indeed protests nationwide over Floyd's death have sparked unrest in major cities, including New York, Houston, Los Angeles, Seattle and even smaller cities like Louisville, Kentucky.

Most of the protestors have reportedly been peaceful. But looting and the setting ablaze of businesses and buildings by some has marred largely peaceful protests over the last week, which have played out live on news broadcasts with fiery scenes and also with heavily armed law enforcement officers unleashing rubber bullets, flash bangs and teargas on protestors, and the mobilization of the National Guard.

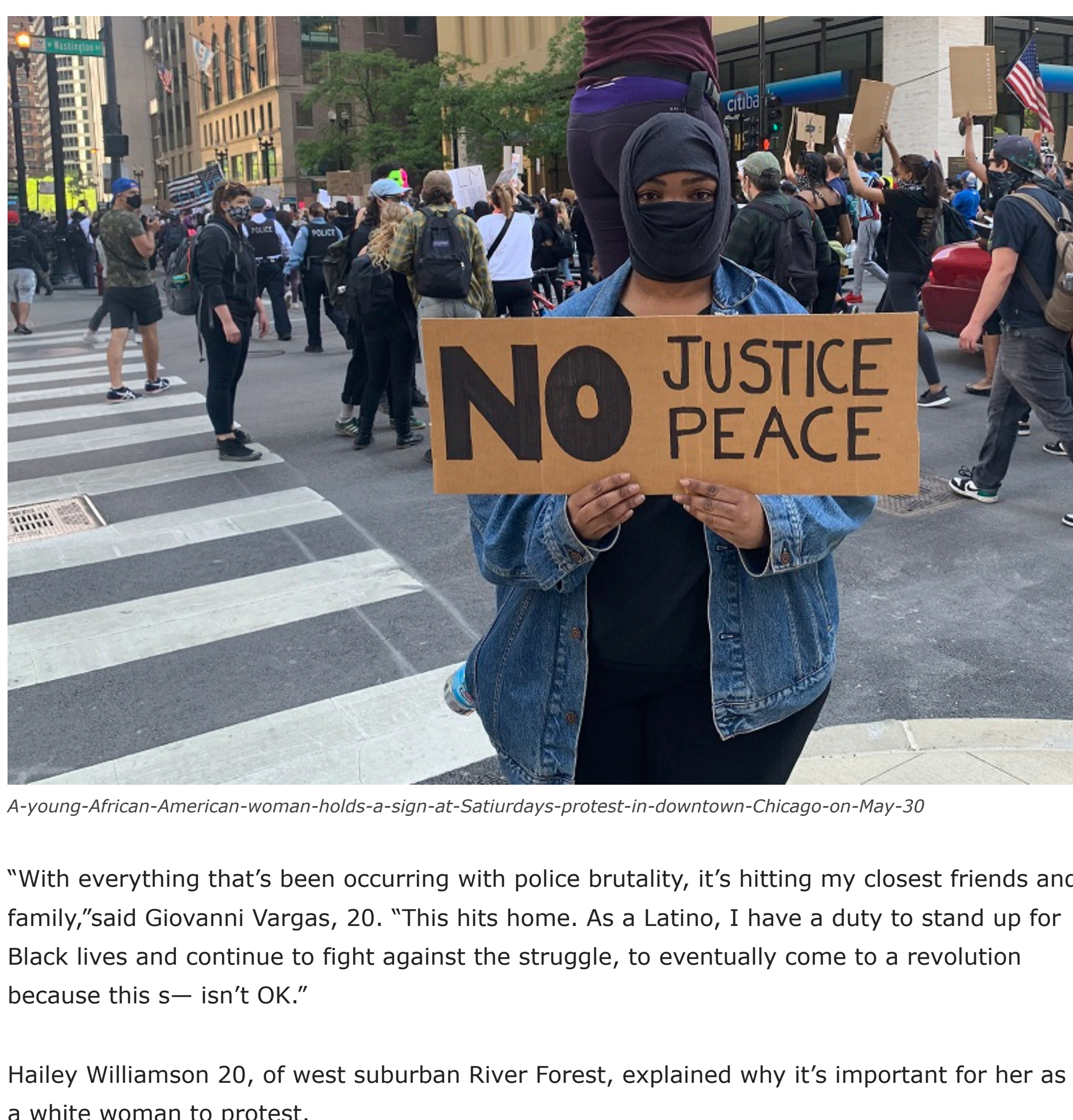
The downtown Chicago protests this past weekend were mostly peaceful, at least while daylight lasted, although by nightfall the city was engulfed in widespread looting downtown that spread to other areas.

Earlier, cars honked repeatedly expressing solidarity with every honk. People braved the pandemic. Most wearing masks, and chanting, lifting homemade signs or even lying atop cars as they raised their voices in agreement that American injustice against Black lives must end now.

"This is the generation that breaks curses, and Black lives matter," one sign read.

Indeed the crowd was a rainbow coalition.

A Middle Eastern woman stood on top of her car wrapped in a hijab, with a sign in her right hand, saying, "Protect Black lives," and a Black Power fist raised in the other.



A young African-American woman holds a sign at Saturday's protest in downtown Chicago on May 30

"With everything that's been occurring with police brutality, it's hitting my closest friends and family," said Giovanni Vargas, 20. "This hits home. As a Latino, I have a duty to stand up for Black lives and continue to fight against the struggle, to eventually come to a revolution because this s— isn't OK."

Hailey Williamson 20, of west suburban River Forest, explained why it's important for her as a white woman to protest.

"I grew up with parents who always encouraged me to not care about an individual's race. I cared about the issues of police brutality in the past," Williamson said. "But ignorantly, I would always tell myself I'm not racist."

"Right now, I live with a Black man," Williamson added. "Seeing his physical reaction to seeing a man who looks like him murdered, and watching the video is why I'm out here. It's in my home now."



A young man rides atop a car traveling down State Street while the car radio blasts "Public Enemy."

While for some, seeing is believing, for African Americans the continual emergence in recent years of videotape documenting the horrors that Blacks have suffered for centuries at the hands of white police officers is only proof of what they've always known and lived. The proof and the pain is etched in their hearts and souls.

Maril Hart, 23, an African-American native of Chicago, said he is tired of the constant narrative of marching when Black people are slain.

"I'm pissed off we have to keep doing this and nothing's changing," Hart said. "At first, I was adamant about not protesting because I'm tired of having to do this all the damn time with no change."

Hart said he changed his mind immediately when the Hennepin County medical examiner's preliminary report cited a combination of underlying health conditions and other factors as the cause of Floyd's death.

"When I saw a tweet about the autopsy that was performed, saying that his preexisting health conditions were the reasons why he died, I said, 'no, f— that, that's not how he died. George Floyd died because the officer deliberately pressed his knee into his neck.'"

That anger, determination and passion ran like a river up and down Dearborn Street, Wacker and Lakeshore Drives and other downtown streets filled with young voices demanding change.

"We woke the f— up, we're getting educated," said Vargas. "My generation is realizing that Black and brown lives are being killed slowly. Because of this we're coming together. We have to continue to raise awareness and get educated."



The names of African Americans who died at the hands of police are written in chalk on a sidewalk on Dearborn Street. (Photos by Samantha Latson)

Others agreed. "My generation is realizing that the past actions and ideologies of our grandparents was wrong, now we're trying to rewrite those wrongs," Hart said.

While they marched, protestors continued shouting the names of those gone but never forgotten, with every step and every honk.

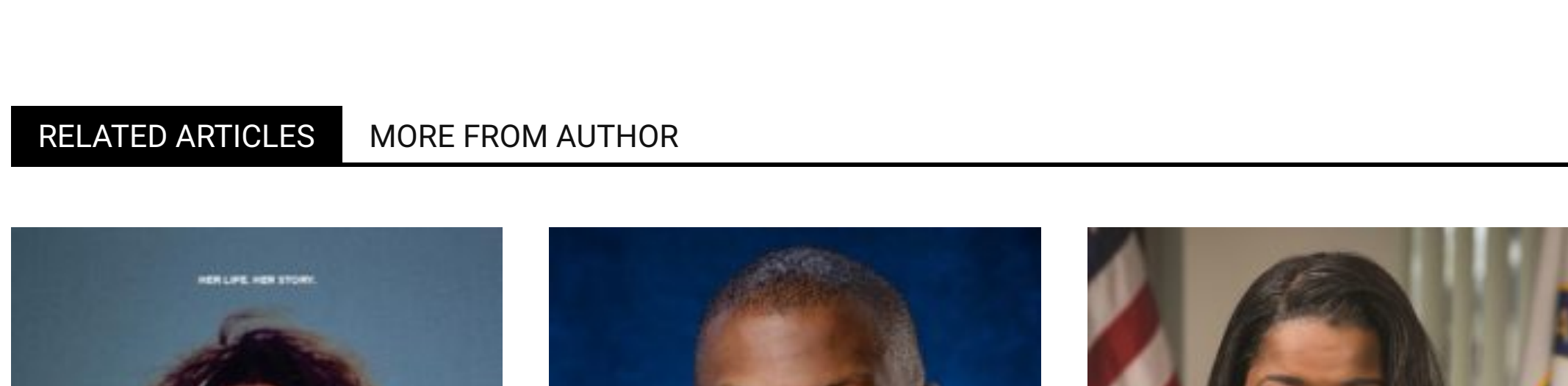
"Say their names," they chanted. "George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Sandra Bland, Philando Castile, Sean Reed... Laquan McDonald. ...Say their names!"

Floyd's family announced that services, which began on Thursday June 4, will continue throughout the weekend and will be held in Minneapolis, Houston and North Carolina.

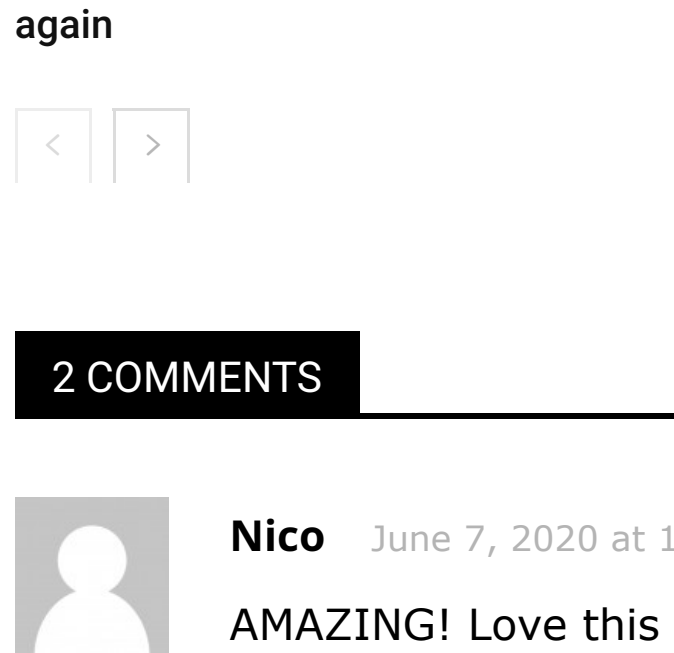
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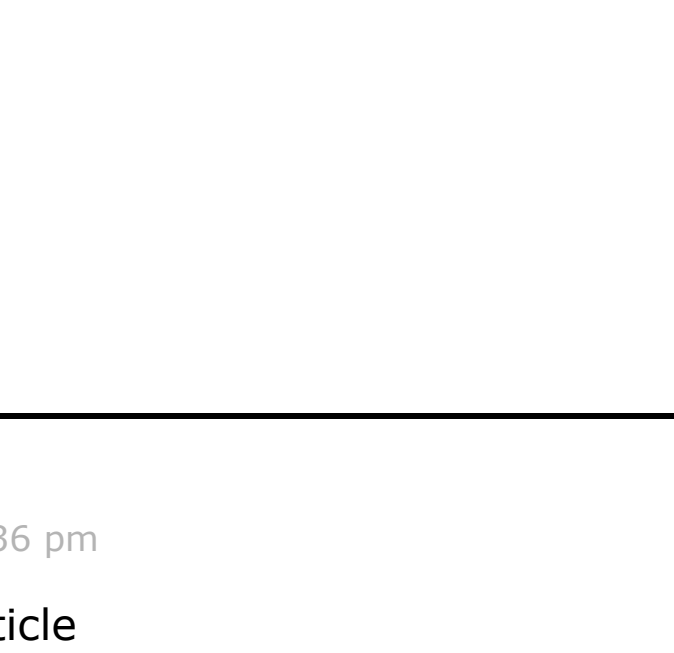
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