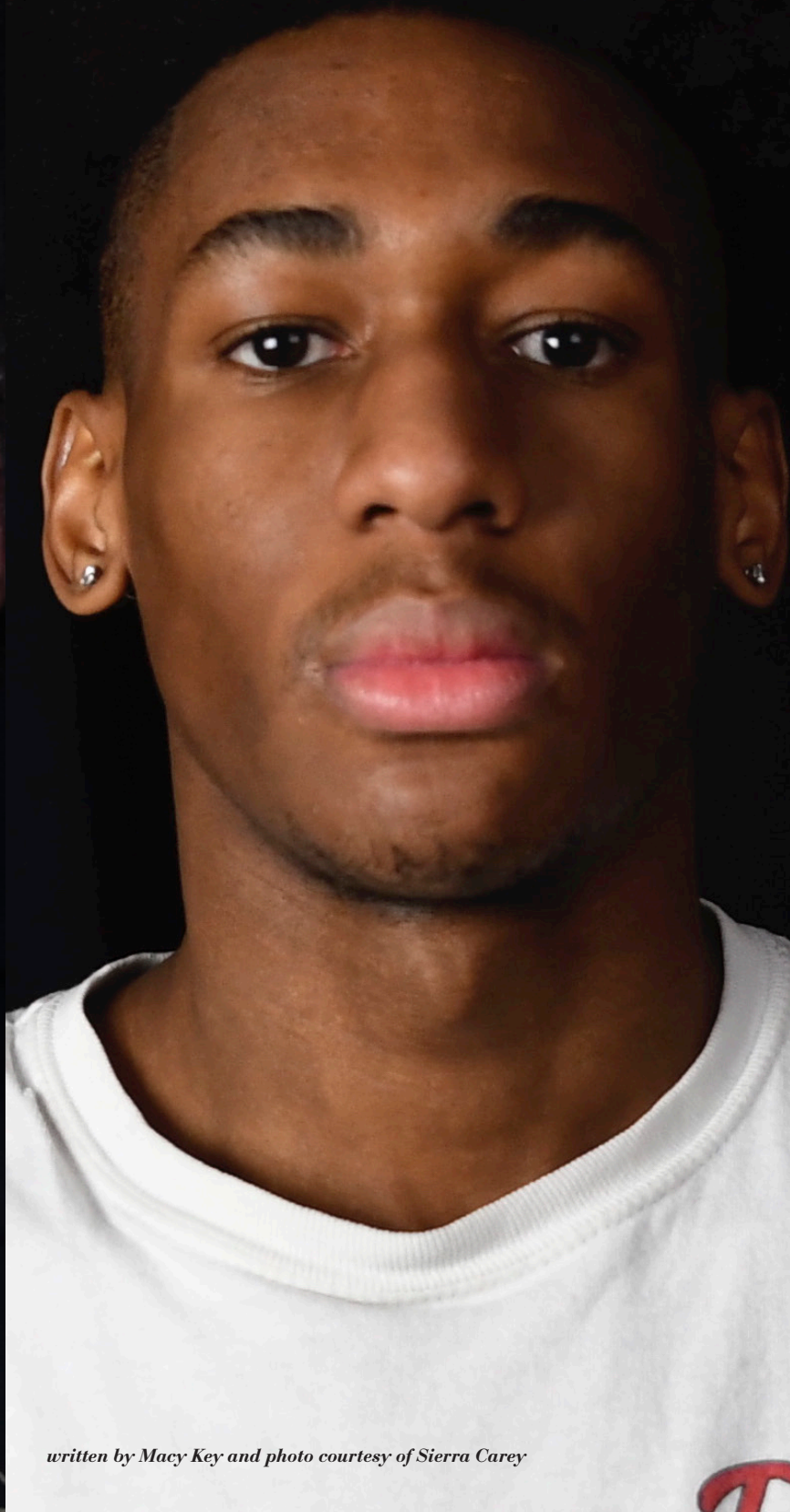


DEMANDING JUSTICE

As one of the only Black wrestlers in the state, senior Taheim Hill explains how his race has affected his high school experience



Like many sports, wrestling involves respect and discipline. For senior Taheim Hill, sometimes the respect isn't mutual. Having grown up in a county that is 89.5% white Americans (census.gov), Hill has spent much of his life adjusting to and dealing with racially biased comments.

"I experienced [racism] last year at regionals. A kid got in my face and I looked at him in his eyes and the ref only looked at me and said, 'Hey, if you don't chill out I'll kick you out of the tournament.' It's like they only care about the white kids in Colorado but not of color," Hill said.

With the wrestling season in full swing, Hill has experienced an increased amount of racial injustice.

"I have experienced racism in my wrestling career, actually recently this Friday. The ref kept hitting me with penalties that were petty because I kept pushing the kid out of bounds or if I slammed the kid hard, the ref kept hitting me with unnecessary roughness and it was unfair. He just didn't like me because of my color. I swear, everything I did was legal," Hill said.

Hill has been dealing with racism since childhood, but as of lately it has been more obvious that the world is nowhere close to safe for people of color.

"I have experienced racism at Castle View High School. I was walking to the bathroom and it was racism all over the bathroom. It was during Trump running again for president. On the mirrors it said, 'F*** N*****', TRUMP 2020.' I was overwhelmed by what I saw; I went to the front of the office and yelled at them and said 'really, y'all let these kids write racist slurs all over the bathroom?' The security guards always patrol the bathroom and you guys telling me you guys didn't see that?" Hill said.

Even though anti-racism efforts have been on the rise since the worldwide protests in 2020, many would argue that there is still work left to do.

"I'm not racist, I swear, but with all disrespect I don't really like you white people; that's just where I'm at. Screaming 'All Lives Matter' is a protest to my protest. I'm tired of this systematic racism. The power in the N word is a different sin. We shouldn't say it but we do; when we use it, we know that's just how we greet each other. There's a double meaning under. Even if I wasn't picking cotton physically that doesn't mean I'm not affected by the history," Hill said.

With tensions high, empathy is more important now than ever.

"I love you, but I hate you at the same time. I wish we could trade shoes or change lives so we could understand each other more, but that will take time," Hill said.

written by Macy Key and photo courtesy of Sierra Carey