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By [Eric Moskowitz](#)

GLOBE STAFF NOVEMBER 26, 2014

One by one, and in twos and threes, about 40 protesters stood before judges in Roxbury and Boston Municipal Court Wednesday to face charges of disorderly conduct and disturbing the peace, stemming from a “Black Lives

Matter” march the night before that blocked traffic in the city and at one point threatened to surge onto Interstates 90 and 93.

Protesting a grand jury’s decision not to charge the police officer in the Ferguson, Mo., fatal shooting, those arrested in Boston ranged in age from 17 to 32 and came from several of the city’s neighborhoods as well as distant corners of New England. They reflected the diversity of a crowd estimated at 1,400 to 1,600 that was made up of blacks, whites, Latinos, and Asians, and both first-time protesters and veterans of social activism.

Nearly all had their charges in court reduced to civil infractions akin to parking tickets, minus the fines. Most were bleary-eyed from a night in jail, and some bore scrapes and bruises, saying they had been placed in headlocks, punched, or dragged across pavement by Boston officers and State Police.

Police declined to respond to specific complaints from the protesters about injuries. However, Boston Police Commissioner William Evans expressed pride Wednesday at what he called a “real soft approach” employed by law enforcement in holding the line to block access to the highway by a crowd that was alternately orderly and “rambunctious.”

“There was a lot of taunting, a lot of name-calling, a lot of pushing and shoving,” Evans told reporters, saying some of his officers recognized protesters from 2011’s Occupy Boston. “We were engaged with the crowd, and as much as they tried to take us to the next level, we were disciplined.”



## Map: Ferguson protests in US

Though most of the gatherings were peaceful the day after the announcement, many cities saw marchers disrupting traffic and getting into confrontations with police.

**Photos: Protesters march**

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Lead organizer Daunasia Yancey of Black Lives Matter Boston said the protest had been planned days in advance through social media, but that the attempt to march onto I-93 from the Massachusetts Avenue Connector Tuesday evening — and, later, the Massachusetts Turnpike near South Station — was spontaneous.

Yancey called blocking traffic an attempt to shake up “business as usual” and said the move was partly a reaction to the cheering of inmates in the nearby South Bay House of Correction, who shared the marchers’ anger and frustration over the announcement Monday night that a grand jury declined to charge a Ferguson police officer who shot and killed an unarmed teenager in August.

“In this country, state violence against black people is the norm. Every 28 hours, a black person is killed by police forces or armed security, and so I think taking the highway was mainly about interrupting a public space,” said Yancey, a 22-year-old activist from the South End, who described herself as a distant relative of Boston City Councilor Charles Yancey. “Unfortunately the police were just one step ahead of us.”

Yancey, who was not arrested, appeared in Roxbury Municipal Court to support the 21 adults arraigned there Wednesday. Eighteen others faced charges at the central Boston Municipal Court, while two teenagers faced juvenile charges, according to the Suffolk County district attorney’s office.

Aided by civil-liberties lawyers, nearly all had their cases reduced to civil infractions, and only a few were ordered to pay court fees. One protester, 26-year-old Segun Idowu of Mattapan, refused the offer and insisted on a trial.

“In my opinion, for me to accept the plea deal would be to acknowledge that the troopers had the right to do what they did, and I don’t believe that,” said Idowu, one of the few who had changed into a pressed suit for his arraignment. Others had not had time to go home after being bailed out and wore rumpled clothes. “Hopefully when I have my day in court, that will come out.”

One other man, 30-year-old Francis D. Brooks III of Randolph, was ineligible to have his charge reduced because of prior convictions for assault and battery, while another, 25-year-old Antonie McKoy of Dorchester, left court before his name was called for arraignment. McKoy had an extensive record and active warrant out for his arrest already; an additional warrant has been issued, said Jake Wark, a spokesman for District Attorney Daniel F. Conley.

Yancey’s Black Lives Matter group began advertising a “Turn up for Mike Brown” event on social media three

weeks ago, anticipating that no charges would be brought against the officer who shot Brown, an unarmed teenager. They called for people to rally outside the Dudley Square police precinct the night after the grand jury ruling, whenever it came, without advertising that they planned to march from there to South Bay as well. She said she hoped they might get 400 people, similar to a march they held last month to bring their message to Newbury Street's shopping corridor.

"We were amazed at the turnout, and we were also amazed at the show of solidarity," she said.

Michael McCarthy, a sophomore at Vermont's Marlboro College, drove down with friends who wanted to make their voices heard in a challenge to the "interlocking power structures" that he said have perpetuated centuries of oppression against people of color.

They considered rallies in Burlington, Vt., and Northampton but thought an urban setting was most appropriate.

He said he moved toward the front of the march after hearing a "white allies move forward" call, locking arms with others beside him. Soon, he said, he heard a woman nearby cry out, "I'm being choked!" When he moved to help her he felt someone yank his hair, he said. He said a police officer pushed him to the ground, where an officer pressed a knee into the back of his head. McCarthy said his forehead was scraped on the pavement, and he sported a raw wound in court over his right eyebrow.

"I've never been involved in anything as confrontational as this," said McCarthy, who had participated in environmental and gay-rights marches, but was not surprised given the theme. "It's exactly the way I expected it."

David Meredith, a Salem State junior with a black-and-blue right eye, said he was struck in the face, placed in a headlock, and thrown to the ground, even as he joined others in holding his hands up and calling, "No violence, please! No violence, please!"

"We, I think, did a really good thing expressing solidarity with the protesters in Ferguson, expressing solidarity with people who are treated like this all over the world," said Meredith, a 21-year-old from Revere. "It's unfortunate that it came to this, that I have a black eye, but it's a small price to pay."

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