

# Student group Alliance joins rally for statewide concerns

**Hanna Lesky**

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Students from UNC Asheville's gay-straight student organization, Alliance, joined nearly a thousand other participants at a multi-issue rally in Raleigh this past weekend.

"HK on J stands for the 'Historic Thousands on Jones Street' put on by the NAACP every year. The march pushes and advocates a 14 point agenda for North Carolina. The HK on J major initiatives and concerns for the state are: equal LGBTQ+ rights, pushing back against discriminatory voter I.D. laws, high quality education, undocumented rights, support for living wages and universal healthcare, to name a few," said **Matt Turpin, undeclared sophomore and Alliance president.**

Turpin said Alliance tries to

focus its attention on all minorities.

"I was proud to have Alliance, the LGBTQIA+ student group on campus, at HK on J this weekend because it is critical for of us to advocate for the rights of all minorities," Turpin said.

"These initiatives are all interconnected and related. A win for one minority group is a win for all people in society. It was incredible to be at HK on J and see so many diverse people standing up for justice and equality," Turpin said.

Students said HK on J brought together many people advocating numerous issues.

"I realized I was a part of a driving force much bigger than I expected," said **Alexandra Griffin, undeclared freshman and Alliance member.**

"Swarms of people encircled our little group in the march,

but the messages of inevitable change echoed through the streets," Griffin said.

"I recommend something like this for anyone who is passionate about change. Show support for a cause you feel strongly about, spread ideas and talk to people who have had different experiences than you, but have a similar goal in mind," Griffin said.

"Alliance, the LGBT+ group at UNCA, focuses on injustice within the queer community. Extending this passion for change into the real world and not just on campus was a powerful experience," Griffin said.

The event started with members of each individual cause marching together. It ended with participants gathering and listening to representatives of groups involved in the march delivering speeches.

Rev. William Barber II, pres-

ident of the North Carolina National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, was the first to speak. He compared different social movements in history and criticized the government's non-action of economic disparity.

"It's Robin Hood in reverse. It's morally unconscionable. It's constitutionally inconsistent, and it's economically insane," Barber said.

Barber explained poverty is a bigger issue than most people realized, with 1.7 million North Carolinians living in poverty. He also said most poor people were white, working women.

With so many problems facing society, students said they want to take action to solve them.

"I want to have Alliance advocate for multiple causes this semester and in the future, and this march was a great way to

kick this off," Turpin said.

Turpin wants his student organization to focus on homeless advocacy by working with UNCA's unofficial "Food Not Bombs" chapter, which prepares meals for Asheville's homeless community using mostly donated food.

Turpin also wants Alliance to spread awareness and education about HIV and AIDS, and wants to participate in education campaigns against photo I.D. legislation in N.C.

"If passed, photo I.D. laws could disenfranchise thousands of people, even many college students," Turpin said.

"I look forward to next year's HK on J and future events like it. Alliance is always looking for new members. We meet every Monday at 9 p.m. in the Highsmith student orgs. suite and would love to have new faces join," Turpin said.

## HELP WANTED

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