

THE POWER OF STUDENT VOICES IN POETRY

Celebrating Black History Month

DESIGNED BY: MARILYN CONCEPCION

Dear Colleague,

February is Black History month. This month, and every month, let us celebrate the Black Americans who built this nation, amplify the voices of those who continue to fight for a more just society, and recommit to taking real action. We must remember that Black History is American History as we reflect on the people who have strengthened our nation.

This past year, the fight for racial justice was especially important in wake of unspeakable tragedies like the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. People of all ages protested from coast to coast, calling for justice, saying enough is enough, and demanding change. I was particularly inspired by a group of young students at Two Rivers Public Charter School in Washington, DC—where my granddaughter attends. During their recent school showcase they presented their “resistance poems” which I have shared with you in this booklet.

As Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.” During these unprecedented times, where we are also struggling to combat a pandemic that is disproportionately affecting communities of color, we must have the courage to make meaningful change. It is clear that the young authors of these poems certainly have that courage. I hope you are as inspired as I was by their poems.

It is through their dedication and commitment of young people—and that of so many others before them—we are able to continue this fight for equality, justice and opportunity today and for many years to come.

All my love,

Rosa K. DeLauro

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We Were Treated Unfair

Royce Arnold

I want to tell you the story of how us black people did not have the right to vote.

For centuries my ancestors were not allowed to vote because of their skin color.

Back in the day Black people were like honey bees with no days off; we were like tigers hunting nonstop.

We dream of all of us on a beach chillaxing but no we work our butts off and we have no say because we can't vote.

We felt this way from the 17th century to the 21st century.

WE HAVE NO RIGHTS

WE HAVE NO RIGHTS

WE HAVE NO RIGHTS

The voting act was in 1965 and it was impossible for black people to vote before, and that helped black people get their right to vote.

But then that law said those states cannot be trusted to make laws about voting without the federal government having a say.

A majority of Supreme Court justices took away this protection in 2013 thinking states could be trusted with voting.

They were wrong.

WE STILL HAVE NO RIGHTS

WE HAVE NO REPRESENTATION

Being black in America is nothing to feel ashamed of. All these years we were treated like dirt, nobody cared for us, we had no rights.

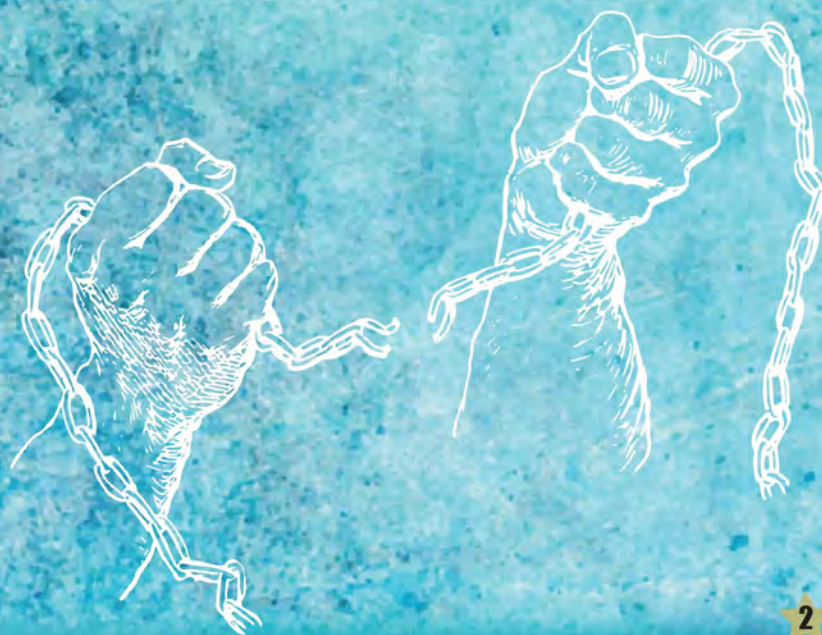
WE WERE TREATED UNFAIR

WE WERE TREATED UNFAIR

WE WERE TREATED UNFAIR

I wish black people were not getting killed for nothing in the future. I wish the world could be better in the future by black African American not being treated unfairly.

Being a black African American is nothing to be ashamed of, be strong, be brave and most importantly, be black.



A Story

Randolph Alexander Baldwin

I want to tell you the story of people of color getting evicted,
not by their property owner but by their neighbors
who are white.

Rocks and bricks made its unsafe for the kids.
Mobs with sticks made us fear for our life.

They would throw rocks at our houses and break the windows
fear in our eyes like we were reacting to a life sentence.
There were white mobs harassing us but we're the ones
getting arrested.

How can that be? It doesn't make sense.

Punishing the attacked not the attackers.

The men in blue saw what was happening but looked the
other way.

But today neighborhoods are like chameleons; the same
house could be in 2 different areas but one of them cost
way more than the other. So, people are forced to spend
more money to live in a good neighborhood.

But what is a "good neighborhood"? A good neighborhood
is a place where you can feel safe and not worry about
your child walking outside and getting shot by the police.
A bad neighborhood is over policed, and teenagers are
scared to go outside because of the risk of being
mistakenly seen as a criminal and getting shot.

What's wrong with this picture?
Why is it like this? Who is
making us fear for our life. Call
our communities "bad"?
The police
"the people in charge"
We need to stand up,
We need to show them off
We need to prove them wrong
There's no such thing as
a bad neighborhood.

It's Like

Yaa Baucum

Do you know what it's like to live in fear?

It's like walking down the street, seeing purse clutched,
street crossed.

It's like being told to fear the people meant to protect you,
be more obedient and cautious than your white friends.

It's like police called, crime being your existence.

It's like broken dreams, missed opportunities,
stained reputation, name replaced with a number,
identity replaced with a false brand of criminal.

It's like whispered words of white chauvinism and slurs
from guards and inmates.

It's like eyes turned as your people die slowly,
bodies adorning the trees and streets of their killers.

It's like we're laid bare with a target on our skin,
incapacitated by the people paid to protect us.

It's like being told you're free, but the lies in the bleached
history book plays out before your eyes.

It's like being black in Amerikkka

What It Feels like to Be Black

Gavin Coy-Smith

Do you know what it's like being black
trying to do normal things,

Do you know what it's like walking down the street
and getting assaulted.

And getting shot a hundred times by a white cop for doing
nothing but jogging at night,

while they push you on the ground and the gun
looks you in the eye and laughs,

while all you hear is "POW"

as you're on the ground bleeding out.

Well it feels like you're a dog with no rights
as the police throw you in the dog shelter.

Do you know what it's like to see someone die
just for asking for food or

asking for directions to the restroom?

It feels like you're an ant watching your friend get crushed.

Do you know what it feels like to have to work
twice as hard and make half as much just because
of the color of your skin?

Do you know what it's like to be refused to be taught just
because we're black or having to go to a less fortunate
school not because we're not smart enough because
we're black?

In order to make our world a better place
we need to start treating people of the color as equals.

The Raging Storm

Marcus Berry

It was much unfair treatment
But we got through like sailors in a storm
And every time the storm would push us back
We went right through it again, and again
Time after time sailing right through
My old buddy Nat Turner tried to fight back
But it was no use, the next day he was hung
We couldn't do anything but try to keep fighting

It was much unfair treatment
Until one time it wasn't like that
My buddy was thrown in jail
for standing for his rights
Being peaceful like a cloud
But then came the storm
Locked him away and we haven't seen each other since

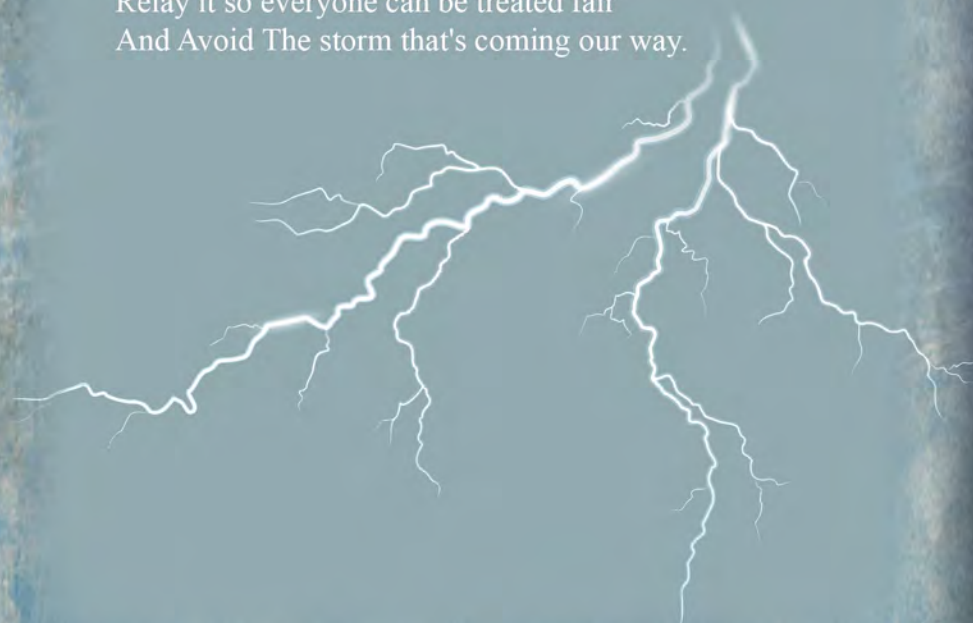
It was much unfair treatment
But nonetheless the storm kept pushing me back
And time and time again pushed through
I think I should do something about the storm
It's been pushing me back for too long

It was much unfair treatment
This treatment is unfair
To the point where people are losing houses
jobs, money, and going to jail
Cause: The Storm

It was much unfair treatment
The storm has been around for 50 long years
From the day I was born until now
And I don't think it will stop
We had one man who stood up for us named
 Martin Luther King
The storm took him out.

It was much unfair treatment
It saddens me to see it
I'm the only one left
So fleeing is the choice that is the best
The storm caught up to me

And this time
I could not push it back
I'm currently in the storm's prison
So if anyone gets this message
Relay it so everyone can be treated fair
And Avoid The storm that's coming our way.



Black Freedom Demands

Elijah Bostick

I will not stand by while black people are being
disrespected by police.

I will not stand by while police kill black women
for no reason.

I will not stand by while black people's houses
are being sold.

I will not stand by while black people aren't being
treated fairly.

I will not stand by while black people are getting
shot for protesting.

In the world I see black people being killed
by white policemen for no reason.

I see black people being disrespected.

Just like when black people could not buy homes
in certain neighborhoods.

Do you know what it feels like to be Black,
it feels unfair it feels unnecessary and
it feels like a terrible world to be in because of
white people.

The world is a volcano erupting with people's emotions.

It's like you're being bullied in school and
you're getting beat up,

There are men and women who are racist to black people
and it almost feels like you just want to end the suffering
and you just want to die.

And you always ask yourself is it your fault
that your life is like this.

In a world I see unfairness to black people,

And you always ask yourself is it your fault
that your life is like this.

In a world I see unfairness to black people,
I see no justice, no freedom to black people,
In a world I see police not getting in trouble
for killing black people,

Just like when the KKK killed black people
and did not get in trouble.

I see black people not getting the same punishment as
white people when they do something bad,
it almost feels like the world is going to explode.



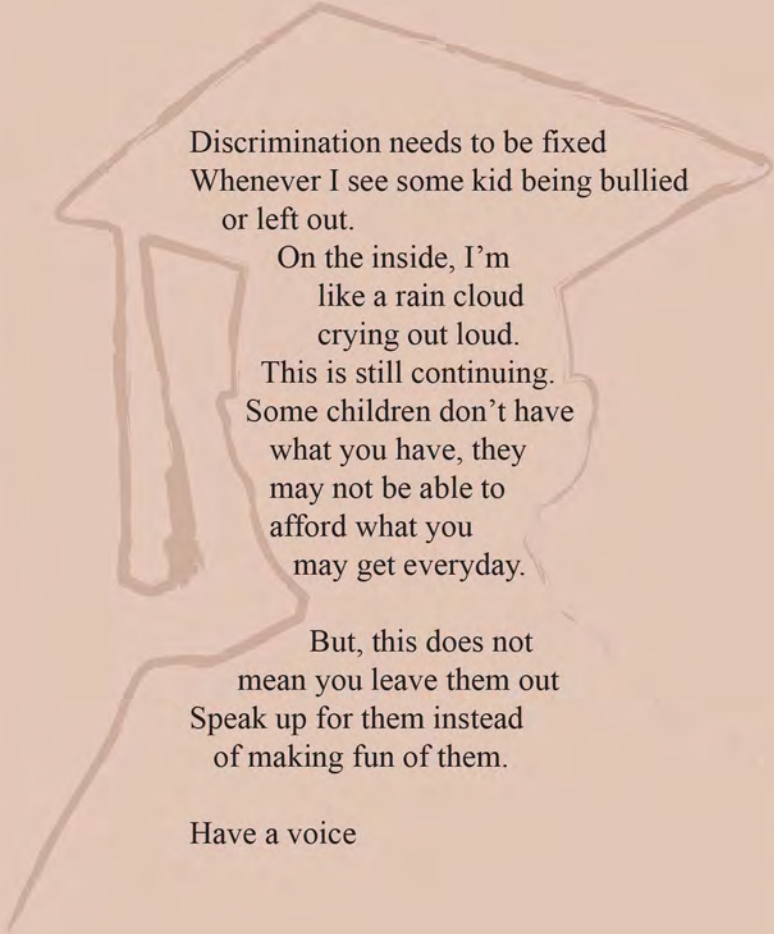
Education Back Then

Taylor Ann Brown

It's Missouri, 1847 they passed an act saying slaves,
black kids, and adults were not allowed to read or write
Slave owners banned reading and writing
If a slave was caught educating
BOOM
The slave owner would whip or even shoot them
Slave owners are cruel, like a thorn poking you in every
spot of your body
But the slaves did what they had to do
To get the education they needed
They were like spies finding freedom

Now, we are told to go to school
We are told to get the education we need
We are told to try our best
We are told to do well in school
We are told to be kind to others
But, some of us don't seem to understand the words
"be kind"

Slavery is over, its been about 600 years now.
But, some students and teachers, even adults are still
discriminating against children on how they look, act,
sound, or where they live.



Discrimination needs to be fixed
Whenever I see some kid being bullied
or left out.

On the inside, I'm
like a rain cloud
crying out loud.
This is still continuing.
Some children don't have
what you have, they
may not be able to
afford what you
may get everyday.

But, this does not
mean you leave them out
Speak up for them instead
of making fun of them.

Have a voice

Do you know what it's like?

Ricky Butts

Do you know what it's like to be cared for?

It's like when your mom asks you what you want for
Christmas and you say a ps4 she tries her hardest to get
that ps4 that you wanted so you can't get mad if you
don't get it because she tried her hardest.

Do you know what it's like to live?

It's like doing the things that you want to do.
Like going to school reading a book.
Reaching your goals.

In the world I see things that I can never imagine.
Like animals, creatures, and history Native Americans
stuff like that.

But now we know everything as we grow
we know more and more.

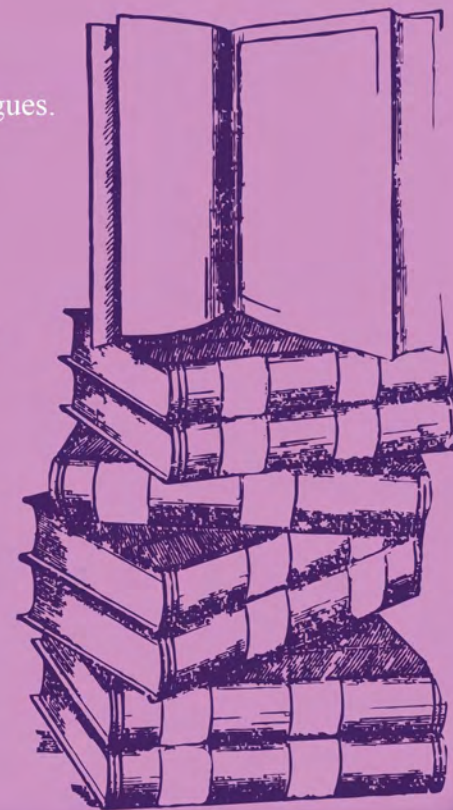
Did you know that in the 1880s people were getting sick
and dying from diseases?

It's still happening today.
Some places still don't have access to doctors.
We need to help them.
We need to cure them.

Did you know that racism was going on in the 1880s?

It's still happening today.
Back then it looked like black communities not being
allowed to read and write
Then it got better. Kind of.
Schools separated by race.

Fast forward to today,
School feels good.
We want to be there.
But it's not perfect.
The rich get rich schools.
And the poor bite their tongues.
We can't stay silent.
We need to make it right.
We need to protest.
Speak out online,
Until all students,
Have everything they need
To learn.



Ever Since

Ethan Cockrell

I'm at home minding my business,
Then out of nowhere
BANG,
I hear the noise in my stomach
it makes my heart jump.

I hear sirens as loud as dogs barking at night.
I know exactly what happened
another innocent Black man shot.

Do you know what it feels like to be African American
in the society we live in today?
Where it feels like you can't be yourself without being
called ghetto or hood.
Where if you walk down the street being caught by the
wrong eyes you're a criminal.

We have been oppressed for years
and it still hasn't stopped.
When will it stop if not now?
The fear of losing your life for no reason,
The pain of losing someone important to you
just because of their skin tone,
the pain of having to tell someone's mother
that their baby has been shot and killed.

When will people stop thinking that we are animals,
475,900 black people imprisoned as of 2017.

When will people give us the same amount of respect?
When we protest,
we get pepper sprayed and arrested
When others protest,
they get their hands held getting escorted out of the Capitol.

When will we get the same income?
Black males earn 74 percent as much as
their white male coworkers

When will we get the same jobs?
White men with a criminal record
are more likely to get an interview
than Black men
with no criminal record.

When will we...



Everything was Whitewashed

Kamiah Crane

Do you know what it's like voting as an African American?
Everything was whitewashed, and racial inequality was
baked into the US government.

The voting rights were simply unfair because the color of
our skin, the texture of our hair and the features of our
faces voting was rigged for us blacks.

Imagine being turned away.

"You're not wanted!"

You're allowed to vote but still people threaten you.

You feel unsafe.

Overwhelmed.

It's unfair.

Is segregation still alive and well?

The year is...1965

50 years later and some still turned away

"Your vote doesn't matter"

People can't help it that blacks and browns can vote so they
threaten us and expect us to feel safe.

Nothing is fair, law or not.

Is racism still alive and well?

The year is... 2020

I see the US government abandon the goal
of racial equality,

the U.S government was always about inequality from the
beginning.

I know that white supremacist politicians, aided by
terrorists like the Ku Klux Klan, that created racist
workarounds to all the new amendments to the
Constitution.

I feel like everybody should have equal rights no matter
what skin color you are. It shouldn't matter because I
know it's not right to discriminate.

We must make sure our rights are equal and fair because
that is what is right,

We must fight for equality.



Our Vote is our Future

Chelsea Dargba

In my history I see an organization
An organization of people making a life mission
Just a small group of Black North Carolinians in 1800's
Trying to make their mark that our vote is our voice

They participated in a convention
Creating new systems to help African Americans
They got a voice in politics and education
All across the north and south

I wish I could call them
So they can help me get prepared
The fight is not over
It has just begun

More racial inequality in the government
Getting attacked by the KKK
Laws targeted at African Americans
Voting rights acts to assure our rights

In this world I see no one
No one that I can trust
No one that can save me
No one that will give me my voice

Everyone plans for the future
I live in the present
More like a loop of the past
Just renaming itself

How many U.S senators can represent me out of hundred
Only two

How many African Americans presidents have we had;
Only one out 44
Every textbook whitewashed
Racism always being denied
How did we miss it?
We won the battle but not the war

My vote is giving me a say in my future
Without it
It's like sleeping on a bed of nails
No comfort or relaxation; just pain

In my future I see darkness
No light
No freedom
Just trapped in a loop of darkness

Me secretly putting a white envelope in a ballot
To show that I HAVE EARNED MY RIGHTS
Even though we have already claimed them
I still feel strong denial

Waking up every morning
Wondering if my brothers and sisters are still alive
Trying to find the money to pay my bills
Having health care when I need it

Lost in my trains of thought
Hoping to stop this loop
Wishing I could help: but
I live in fear of those who fear me

There is still hope
That little light so hard to see from the naked eye
The bee buzzes all through the night
I can help expand the light but will you stand up with me?

Change Needs to Come

Sadie Delicath

Do you know what it's like
to be a Black person in America?
'Cause I don't.

I don't look at the tv and see another brother, mother,
daughter, or father hanging from a tree or getting shot in
her sleep wondering if next time it will be me.

Do you know what it's like
to be a white person in America?
'Cause I do.

When I see a cop car there are no butterflies dancing in my
stomach or the sinking feeling something bad
is going to happen.
Is that how everyone feels, or just me?

Do you know what it's like
to be a white person in America?
'Cause I do.

Having privilege because of the color of my skin,
being protected by something I'm born in.

History is a broken record, skips a couple of times,
but always repeats itself.

Our laws and our norms always find a way
to keep racism around.

Slavery led to Jim Crow and Jim Crow to police brutality.

We have the power to put an end to this pain,
but Black people are silenced as if by thunderous rain.
Denouncing racism is not enough, a black square is not
enough, do you really care or is it just a bluff?
Black Lives Matter is not a trend,
we have to put racism to an end.

You Don't Know What It's Like

Yima Donga

Do you know what it's like to be black?
It's like planting a seed in a desert.
It's hard to make it out.
All the odds are against you.

In education, white schools are more educated than black
schools,
leading to African-Americans not having enough education to
get employed.

Going through poverty,
because of slavery to our ancestors.

You don't know what it feels like to be black.

We're driving under the speed limit, minding our business,
and there goes the siren, and then we're pulled over.
These officers got a cold heart.

The first police weren't even created to solve crimes,
but to hunt down runaway slaves.

They always think we've got some drugs.
But they'll kill a man named George over fake money.
Can't even reach for the license and registration-
You don't know what it feels like to be black.

The Pain

Cody Encarnacion

Every black boy or girl deserves proper health care.
Every black boy or girl deserves to be free from pain.
America's healthcare system bullies black Americans
Into thinking
They're not important.
It's like getting punched in the face over and over.
Black Americans are 2.8x more likely to die from Covid.
How can we change this?
This isn't a public health issue,
This is murder
When people who are supposed to protect us
are doing the most harm
Politicians, police officers
all our lives in chains
Shackled by institutions paid to protect and serve?
George Floyd

The man was calling for help,
for his mama
And the people who are supposed to help us protect us
are actually killing us
that was murder.

"I can't breathe"
He wasn't the last to say these words
People with Covid

Yes, you know what I am talking bout
Covid
They are like I can't breathe, I can't breathe
You see it's not just health, it's not just this poor injustice
It the racism, it's the bullying, it's everything
It's Hospitals
Police officers
Everything
We need help

The world watches while we kill each other.



When Will This Stop

Esteyssi Espinosa Dilone

I will not stand by while
the justice system is not doing justice.

Black ink on the streets and the family not getting justice.
Black parents have to teach their young kids what to do
in case they get stopped by the police.
How are families not getting justice?

Them living with fear each day.
Mothers are crying black people afraid
of the men in the blue shirts.
Afraid of the men who are supposed to protect them.
Yet instead of protecting they are killing them.
How are families not getting justice?

In the world we live where people
are judged by the color of their skin.
In the world we live where slavery is illegal
but black people
still being hurt by cops
like we are still living in 1619.
In the world we live in, even though
the law says we are equal,
the people with colored skin
are still being treated like objects.
Like we are still in slavery.
How are families not getting justice?

So how would I stand by while the justice system is not
doing justice.

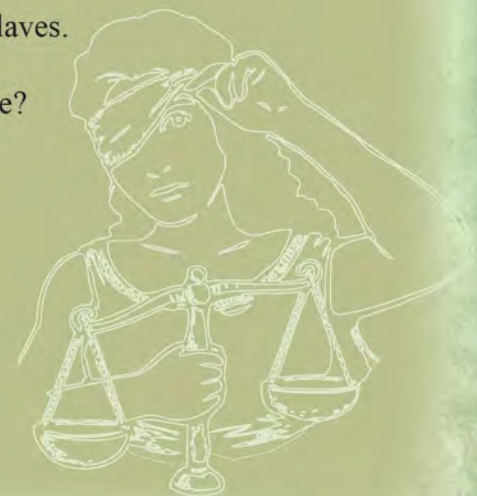
So how would I stand by while the justice system is not
doing justice.

How would you feel if it was your family being killed?
How are cops killing innocent black people and then they
are not being punished?
How are families not getting justice?

Millions of black people die each day
In the hands of police. Most innocent.
Black people going down like cows on a farm.
You see slavery was often brutal barbaric and violent
And cops are often brutal barbaric and
violent toward African Americans.
How are families not getting justice?

Black people are free but not really.
The treatment that black people get from
cops is like they are not free,
Nobody owns them but they are
still being hurt like they are slaves.
When will this stop.
When are families getting justice?

That is all I want to know.



Shackles to Handcuffs

Calise Evans

Do you know what it's like to be judged by the color of
your skin
to live being afraid of the man in the blue
to love life but can't live it (look up)

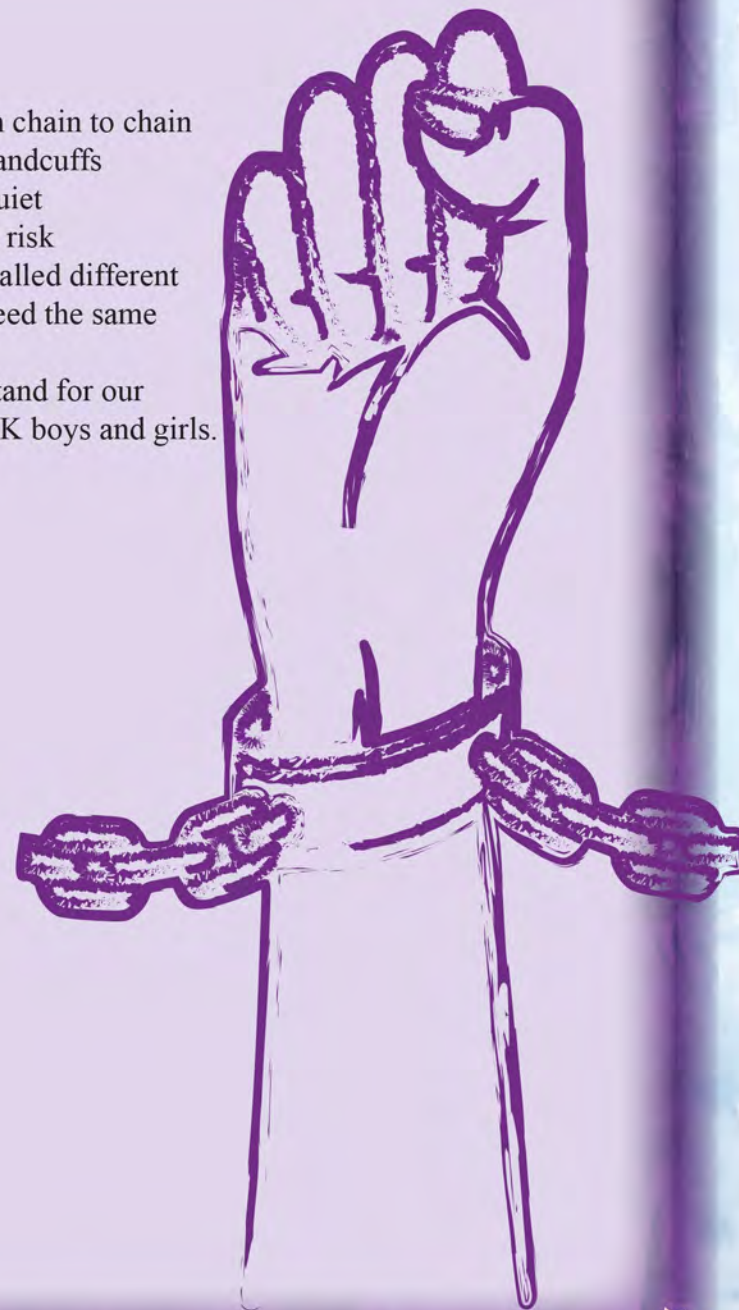
I will not stand by while my young African American
boys and girls have
their life painted on the concrete
and their mothers crying pools full of water
Because the man in the blue took the little bit of light
they had left (look up)

I will not stand by and not speak up for them
Now as the black mothers sit in the dark full of anger
and scared to speak up
Because if they do they're called savages or animals
because of the hurt they feel
and those with a blanket over their eyes won't see the truth
(look)

I will not stand by and not speak up for them
Us blacks walk around with the fear of getting shot
Or harassed
And we try to be calm
Just so the man in the blue
or people with a blind fold don't see
SUSPICIOUS (get loud)

We went from chain to chain
Shackles to handcuffs
I won't stay quiet
No matter the risk
Why are we called different
if we all bleed the same

We all shall stand for our
Young BLACK boys and girls.



The Employment of African Americans

Da'shawn Ferrell

In the last 10 months,

I've seen Black people either get laid off from work.
Or their work essential so they have a higher chance to be
exposed to COVID-19.

This makes me so upset I could explode.

I know that black people could have made 5.9 trillion
and 14.2 trillion but all that money went to all the
plantation owners. I feel like African Americans were
robbed out of everything they could have had
and it makes me feel as mad as a bull.

I know that African Americans have a less chance of
getting a call back for a job then white people do.
If your name is black, you are less likely to hear the buzz
of the phone calling you back.

Or they will just put the black man or woman on
minimum wage.

We are descendants of enslaved people and they worked
for free because they never got paid and they still give us
Black people minimum wage.

The people with colored skin get treated differently
because of what we look like.

Because of what we look like.

What Is It Like

Izaiah Glosson

African-American brothers and sisters whose bodies were
innocently put on this concrete

Do YOU

Do YOU know what it is like
to be scared to walk outside every day
not knowing what is going to happen,
constantly watching behind your back?

People being wronged for the color of their skin
These streets are like a graveyard
some cops hearts are stone
These cops need to stop breaking our bones.

We are playing one minute hurting the next
cops pressing their elbows on our neck
Now it is your turn to choose what you are going to do,
speak up or keep seeing dead bodies on the news.
In this world, you need to have wealth to have great health.

People dying from sickle cell
they feel like they are in hell

We are all living on our knees
We need to rise these cops are corrupt
Like Maya Angelou, we still rise from slavery from
segregation police brutality but still, we shall rise
from this burden our ancestors had to carry we shall not
stand for this anymore this is why we rise
This is why we fight.

Reality to the Dreaming

Marcus Gibson

Do you know what it's like to live in this time being a
Black boy and being scared of what's outside? The world
against me, my mom telling me to be careful of what I
do and how I do it.

Afraid that even if I'm perfect there still might be that
chance that I'm attacked, and I won't make it back.

Do you know how that feels, maybe you do.
Maybe you don't.

They are killing all these black people and for what, if
you're so dominant why would you be scared?

Us black people have had the odds stacked against us since
we were born.

Parents having conversation with their kids telling them
you may die because of your skin.

We been treated badly left and right but yet you've never
seen us cross the line as badly as you have.

We protest with peace; you protest with brutality.
You said you were going on a "Rough ride" but really you
we're telling Freddie Gray to get ready to die.

Then you bust into Breonna Taylor's room and shoot her
more than once just because you thought you saw
something suspicious.

Let's not forget how you killed George Floyd by putting
your knee on his neck for 8 minutes suffocating him
hearing that he said he couldn't breathe but yet you stood
there and watched him die.

But we are the criminals, we are the black people who are
called ghetto and people are scared of when in reality we
know who the real threat is.

So, I'm calling out for help, I'm calling for justice, I'm
calling for peace and for a beautiful life to begin.

Will you help us fight today or will you continue to stand for
these discriminatory disrespectful degrading Acts?

Past and Today

Ahman Habib

In the world I see it like this
The beginning of racism was made long ago
And has been passed on ever since
It's kind of funny that people back then believed
that sort of stuff
It was pretty easy to convince
Millions of absurd ideas like witches and witchcraft
Racism was just one of them

And today people still believe
the things they said back then
It's honestly very crazy
African Americans don't ever get equal rights
These concepts really faze me
African Americans get killed everyday
Most things they don't even do
Will this have an end?
I don't have a clue
Racism still exists today

It's a time machine that people went into
And decided to bring back the worst parts of history
Racism

Slavery to knees on necks
The system is corrupt and may you all rest
Some African Americans imprisoned over 10 years for weed
Few hundred years ago weren't even allowed to read

It's hard for a African American to have a chance to succeed
When all the cops and the judges want them to suffer,
want them to bleed
They pass it down to their children, and they really mislead
Equal rights everyday is something that we honestly need
Free from slavery but African Americans not really freed
Like a brick wall, racists stand in our way, they impede
And I wish we would be treated like human beings
I don't know what else racist white people are seeing
And

We need justice
Twenty years in prison for a substance?
Judges and cops should be disgusted
Throwing people in prison one by one
Shooting guns at us like we're the enemy, gun by gun
But we're not the enemy
Feels like this war has gone forever, endlessly
So please join the fight, anyone
Being peaceful wins the fight,
don't stop until this war is won.

Nothing has Changed

Dontae Hansford II

Do you know what it's like to be racially profiled because of your skin and miss big opportunities because of it, It's like judging a book by its cover.

I remember reading about an KKK leader's son, who was raised to hate blacks but later on in life the son got locked up and cell mate was black and what happened throughout that time the son said "the people he was raised to hate are the same people that taught him to love."

Love can break down hate just as a positive can outweigh a negative.

We have a justice system where equal is not really equal. We have a justice system made for blacks to fail, we have a justice system that is like growing a rose in concrete.

Slavery is supposedly over,
But there are still ways that they try to brainwash and control black people.
They still take from us today.

The America you know today would not be nothing without us. Many of the things we use in everyday life were made by a black person, but no surprise they took the credit from what we made. As they still take from us today.

Our dignity, our rights, our labor, our sweat and tears, our culture. Our family's...

You see nothing has changed.

Except for the way that you see it.

You want us to entertain you, but you don't want to see our side of the story.

You don't want to understand what we go through.

Being black in America is like being a penguin in the jungle; you're an animal just like everyone else, but you're not in the right habitat and cannot thrive.

If anything, it has gotten worse and our ancestors to the present have white kids being raised to hate and that follows them to school for making fun of kids for not having dads but not knowing that their souls were snatched out of our hands because of incarceration and police brutality. If the system was fair it wouldn't be the same as the big problem we have now.



Do you know what it's like?

Caleb Heard

Do you know what it's like to live as a
black female or male
and having people walk away if you don't look like them
If you don't act like them.

Do you know what it was like for Ruby Bridges?
She was a six year old girl when she first went
to an all white school
being judged like she stole something
just for wanting to learn
But she walked like she didn't hear none of them
like having headphones on in NYC on a busy day.

Do you know what it feels like if you are person of color
it's like you can't be yourself in this world
because of the way you look.

Do you know what it feel like if you are person of color
they get less pay working harder
and the government does nothing to help.
Do you know what it feel like if you are person of color
Watching the government deny black families
loans for houses.
Redlining families out of certain neighborhoods
We like to pretend it happened a long time ago.

But it still happens today
Do you know what it feels like if you are a person of color?
Neighborhoods with a majority of black/brown citizens
would have lower housing costs for even the same home
that you could find in a white neighborhood.
All we want is for all the black people
is for them to be treated right and not have.

Justice

Jolie Holdip

Do you want to know what it's like to be 12, African American
and a female in America?

I have been on the face of the earth for a little over a decade,
and the second I came out of the womb it feels like the
world has been out to get me.

Police officers, Trump Supporters: There are many people who
dedicate their lives to hunting people who look like me.

Authority figures use their power to
manipulate the justice system:

George Floyd

Breanna Taylor

And most recently Dustin Higgs:

*An Innocent man stuck on death row, even when the man who
committed the crime came forward.*

Would this happen if they were white, America?

Sometimes it feels like America was made to hate me

Just like the justice system betrays me

Lynched, beaten, bought, mistreated

And what do I get, a slap in the face for being me AGAIN

Sometimes I think America's never going to change
If a change were to happen, it would've started already, right?

In many ways, it's gotten worse.

Every time we go forward, we take a jump back.

Although there's No logic behind this revolution-
they're trying to start.

Passion but no purpose

Sometimes I think America's never going to change.

Why us?

Shayla Hinton

I want to tell the story of how it is to grow up black in America from a child's perspective

Do you know how it feels to look behind your back just because you're wearing a black jacket with a hood?

Do you know how it feels to not have your hands in your pockets just because someone might think you have a gun?

It feels scary that I have to grow up like I'm in a tiny little box with no way to get out of it and that one day I will have to teach the next generation how to act if you want live a "free" life

Black people will get framed for crimes white people committed, there's even evidence that those white people did it but they still put that black person in jail or even kill them

It's even proven that from 1880 to 1940, white mobs lynched thousands of African Americans, even if they weren't in violence themselves, white police officials, judges, and juries almost never charged or convicted those who did.

I feel like history is repeating itself but in a more modern way.

Even though black people are not getting publicly beaten, publicly lynched, or working all hours of the day without getting paid doesn't mean they still don't experience it in their own way.

Black people are getting thrown like rag dolls while getting pulled over for speeding.

"Black people are getting executed, there are news reports about the execution so it's well known

And black people have to leave their homes every day during a pandemic having to work up to 10 hours a day and still don't get the right amount of money they are supposed to have.

In the world I see black people getting killed on the news with no explanation at all and their families not getting justice.

I have to speak up now and stand up for what I believe in and fight for the black youth while I still have the chance.

Why us?

How Housing Has Changed the World

Caleb Johnson

I want to tell you the story of housing

2020

When I drive with my family I look out the window
I see people holding up signs.
People sitting on sidewalks with blankets around them.
Under bridges I see people with tents and blankets.
I feel down like an elevator
I wonder how did they get to this point?
We need money
We need money

1930s-1960s

Uncle Sam offered millions of white Americans low cost
loans "cha ching" to buy their first homes.
In time the property doubled, tripled, or quadrupled.
Like if you buy something for \$1.00 then somebody
gives you back \$10.00
Uncle Sam almost entirely denied these loans
to Black families.
I feel butterflies in my stomach
I wonder if that made the people homeless?
We need money
We need money

2020

I see the people holding signs.
I wonder if their family was homeless?

And their family's family?

"I wonder how many generations back it goes"
Are they hungry and tired?
I feel blue like the sky

We need money
We need money

Still 2020

100 dollars goes to a white family, while getting \$5.04
it's like somebody giving you something
that you never wanted.

This is how wealth in America works.

61 U.S. cities found that banks, and other lenders continue
to deny African American home
loans, making them borrow at far
higher rates than their white
counterparts.

I am about to explode like a volcano
I wonder why would they do that?
We need money
We need money



Blacks All Around

Samuel Timothy Johnson

JUSTICE SYSTEM

I see a cruel world outside and it tells a cruel story
I feel angry whenever my kind gets killed
Officers are not getting in trouble for killing blacks
Black people are not getting
the same punishments as whites
Arrest the officers that are killing blacks
Blacks get choke holds but not white people
They got to stop choke holds and Floyds
It's wrong, It's murder, It's not right
Treat black people with respect
like how you treat your family
Slavery is like a big prison that no one can escape
In the 21 century it's still here
It's still haunting us

EDUCATION

They should give black schools more money
They should have more black teachers
Free education
Blacks fought for their freedom
You can't take that away from us
Blacks were forced to go to school
without a single black teacher
Blacks should get the same amount of funding as white
schools/richer neighborhoods

HOUSING

Poor people don't have
anything
They have to find shelter so
they could survive in
the world
We need more funding for
counselling so that they could provide for
homeless people
All we want is for police and
the government is to look
at black people the
same way they look
at white people
Treat us like you
respect us
No racism
No killing
We want freedom
We'll get freedom

On the Ground

Isaac Jordan

Log #1

I never thought about these things as a little kid, but as I
grew older many perspectives changed
I once witnessed something that I'll never forget
I heard rumbles, I heard screaming, I heard cries of help
I heard "get on the ground," and I wish many people would
understand how those men felt

Log #2

You're trapped in the prison box forever
You're trapped in the prison box forever
The ground is your only friend in this life
It's a tragedy that these things happen without warning
These Young men, woman, and children
never get enough mourning
In the world I see people who have experienced
more pain than anyone
It's not fair to the people that got locked away in Jail,
while others got away
Oh god it feels like this will last forever
If you wanna make America great then why do little kids
have to ask the police "are you going to shoot us"?

Log #3

When in the court it seems like the Judge favors someone
else while you desperately try to defend yourself
Going to Jail isn't any different, officers sometimes beat
you for no reason
It is sad and you feel like your life is over
That's the scary life some people have lived, so I'm asking
Are you gonna let history happen again
And that barbed wire asking how's the weather
The rates for incarceration are too high
The U.S having the highest
Thanks to the 13th amendment
The Future doesn't look so bright
For they are as bright as prison lights

Log #123 (last log)

My talents always seem to show in our darkest times
The day my logs end is the day I die
I spent my life in prison
Please Use your time as a recovery and show your talents,
and overall spread Happiness

You're trapped in the prison box forever
You're trapped in the prison box forever

What Happened to DC?

Dhilen Massey-Jackson

Do you know what it's like to live in DC?

In DC we're supposed to be equal
but it's still a segregated city.

DC is a city where if you go into the wrong place
at the wrong time you might die.

Because nowadays DC is dangerous, bad, not a safe city.
Policemen are the ones who caused all of this. This isn't
equal for Black people, it's worse. Police are dangerous
so that's why Black people fight back.

The cops want to shoot us and kill us.
This isn't new.
This has been going on decades.
This has been going on for centuries.

I love my race because we came from Royalty, Black,
Kings and Queens which they don't teach in schools.
But what I don't like is cops being racist
treating us unfairly, treating us like...

If a white person was walking past a cop car
the cops wouldn't shoot him/her.
They would say hey and have a good day
The cops are nice to them.
It's like they're all on the same team and we're the rivals.

When Black Lives Matter had a peaceful protest at the
capital, the police had tear gas, rubber bullets, and
pepper spray. When the proud boys and girls came to the
capital and climbed over the walls and broke into the
capital, the police did nothing. This is white privilege
at its best.

The White people have no consequences, but the Black
people have terrible consequences.
We don't have no equal rights.



Fear

Miles McCraw

I see pain, death, blood spilled, and empty rounds.
I see purses clenched and streets crossed.
I see bodies without souls, bodies that have been shot,
BANG.
The gun is an earthquake that shakes the world.
The gun is like the bark of a dog or the shriek of a whistle
that signals death, and then it's all over.
The worm working its way up our veins is fear.
Fear for our children.
Fear we will fade away as we bleed out on the sidewalk.
Fear for our families.
Fear of sending out children by themselves.
Fear that we will leave this earth with holes in our heads
and bodies, and tears down our face,
and a phone in our hands.
FEAR.

I see lives ended too soon, good people dropping like flies,
and the killer still free to do it again.
I see over-policing, unfair incarceration,
and black blood spilled.
The streets are painted with our blood,
our history, and our pain.
And as our eyes close, we take our last breath and are
swept over by the cover of death.
FEAR.

Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner
and so many more.

The pain penetrates us as the pressure on our chest
causes us to pass the threshold.
It's like we're all children,
afraid of the thing under the bed.
Afraid of the dark and the things that lurk in it.
The things that use it as a mask,
a disguise to hide something horrible.
Something evil, something inhumane.
And that same evil is hidden deep in a system,
and it's been waiting to come out.
FEAR

It was over 200 years ago slavery
was abolished in the USA.
But African Americans are still being pulled down by the
shackles of oppression.
I shouldn't have to live in a world where I can't walk on the
street with a hood on and be a criminal.
I shouldn't have to be extra careful
because I don't look like you.
I shouldn't have to fear the police.
I shouldn't be considered a thief because of my skin.
I shouldn't have to deal with the fact that we were stolen from
our home just to be imprisoned, shot, and killed.
We all fear what could be.
We all fear what would be.
We all FEAR.

The Mixed Boy

Jesse Morales

I want to tell you the story of a young mixed boy.

Chemistry created a color unique to him,
A swirl of white and Puerto Rican
A mix that shakes up his whole identity
To make him uncommon

He wants to become a first generation millionaire,
He wants to be able to make his mom a homeowner,
no more rent.

Homes are one of the biggest assets to a lot of families,
and sometimes they are passed down from parents to
children and other generations, which is called
generational wealth.

So What?
White privilege is ruining our country
Storm clouds of violence rolling over the nation every day
Do you know what it feels like to risk your life just to
simply walk to your neighborhood basketball court?

This is not just a poem
This is a story of saying no more.

Our world
our country
can be more peaceful
more equal and more
trusting

No more killing young colored people,
separating families,
mistreating low class families,
no more choosing sides,
No more letting history repeat itself

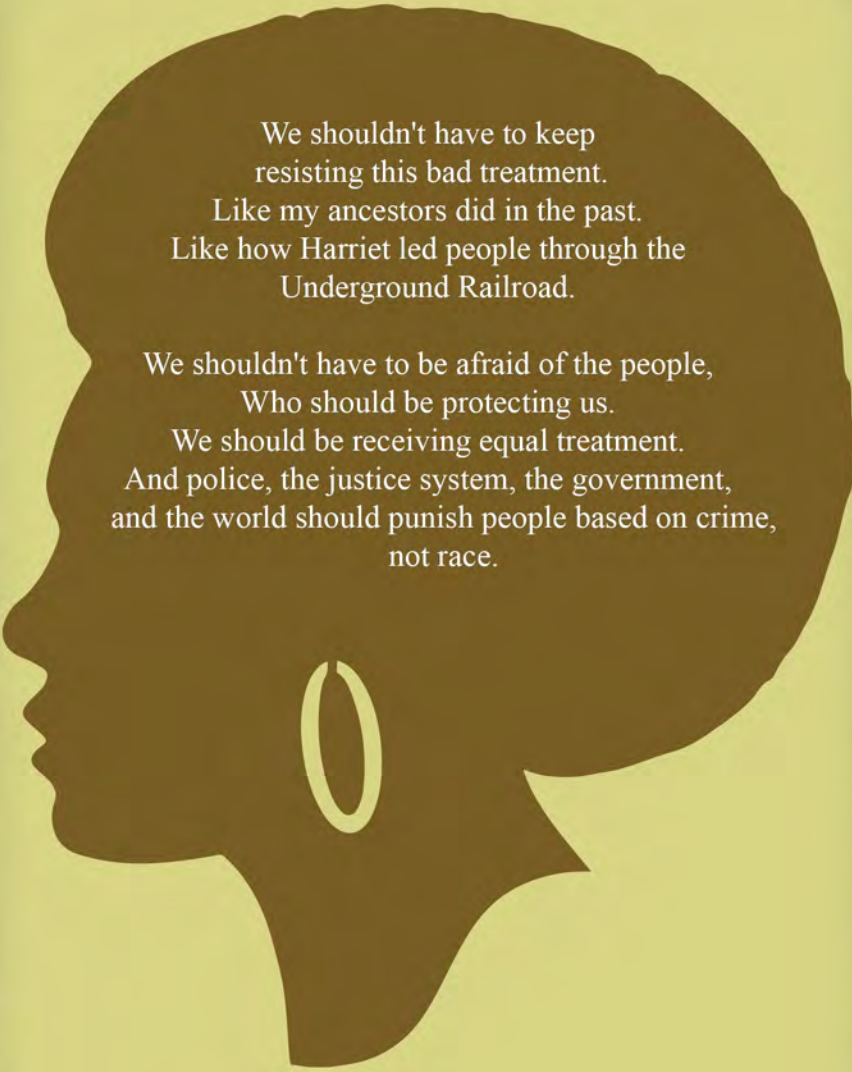
Let's change the chemistry of this country.
Let's build off of each other, make each other stronger.
Let's change history, more and more and more.



Change for Equality

Makeda Moshi

Do you know what it's like to be an African-American?
It's like the feeling of having worth,
Then getting treated worthlessly.
It's like losing another piece of hope,
As we lose another life to police brutality.
Protesting, fighting, marching.
Like millions of people did in 1963.
And to this day we still do it
Because we haven't received equality.
While at school,
I get educated about another black person's life.
Then at home,
I learned that I could lose my life in the police's hands.
Because I'm not white.
Losing another life to the police
Is like having a rose and watching it wilt
Petal by petal
Shots after shots
BANGS and BOOMS
Another life loss to the polices moves
The gun wounds exposed on people's bodies
Reminds me of the lashes on Gordons back, the African
American soldier and slave who fought
in the United States army.
No more dying.
No more families mourning the loss of a life.
No more living in fear and grieving at night.
No more.



We shouldn't have to keep
resisting this bad treatment.
Like my ancestors did in the past.
Like how Harriet led people through the
Underground Railroad.

We shouldn't have to be afraid of the people,
Who should be protecting us.
We should be receiving equal treatment.
And police, the justice system, the government,
and the world should punish people based on crime,
not race.

Do You Know What It's Like to be Black?

Nick Ogidan

Do you know what it is like to be Black in America?
It's like a hunt and black people are the prey
and the cops are the lions and tigers. When black people
get shot, our blood gushes out like a flood on the ground.
I did nothing wrong.
Don't shoot.
I'm just having fun.

When I'm playing outside grown white people, they say
where is your mama?
And it gets my blood boiling because I am not doing
anything wrong.
I am just playing with my bro and we did nothing wrong.
I'm just having fun.

When I go to the store
a white woman follows me everywhere I go
and it makes me feel like I'm gonna blow
Why are you following me?
We did nothing wrong.
Don't shoot.
We're just having fun.

It's not fair that white people get the right to walk freely.
For decades after slavery was abolished black people were
still killed by white mobs. The white mobs did not get any
charges and were never convicted of a crime.



They did nothing wrong.
but be black.
All black people are not the same.
Don't shoot.
We're just having fun.

My dad told me to get something from the car.
I wore my jacket and hoodie.
I put the key in and opened the door. A white lady said, "this
boy is stealing."
I said, "this is my dad's car."
She didn't believe me.
I called my dad,
who came outside
then the woman said nothing.
I did nothing wrong.
Don't shoot.
I am just being me.
I am black.

My Solution

Envie Payton

I will not stand by while Blacks are being oppressed
I will not stand by while Blacks are being called out
I will not stand by while Blacks are being killed
for unfair reasons and not getting any justice
just because so many things that happened when
we were not even born or alive.

The 13th amendment states slavery can still be used
as a punishment that is probably what kept so many
white slave owners going

Slaves built so many cities slaves and people after deserved
so much more. They were being treated as if they were
circus animals but that was when black people could do
nothing about being treated terribly.

When slavery was over you probably couldn't even tell it
was over because some stupid states wouldn't agree,
the 13th amendment emancipated all U.S. slaves
wherever they were, there is no reason the justice system
should be this crazy over something that was over
decades ago BOOM legal racist policies continued after
slavery ended unsurprisingly in Black codes.

No one at all can say black people weren't just arrested for
their skin color.

Everyone knows it is unfair the racist people just don't want
to admit it because they must "love" white privilege. The
thing is black people or their descendants never got any
justice and never even got the hope of it.

The government should at least send some type of
meaningful apology, or monthly payment no one at all
deserves to be treated that way, not any year any day.

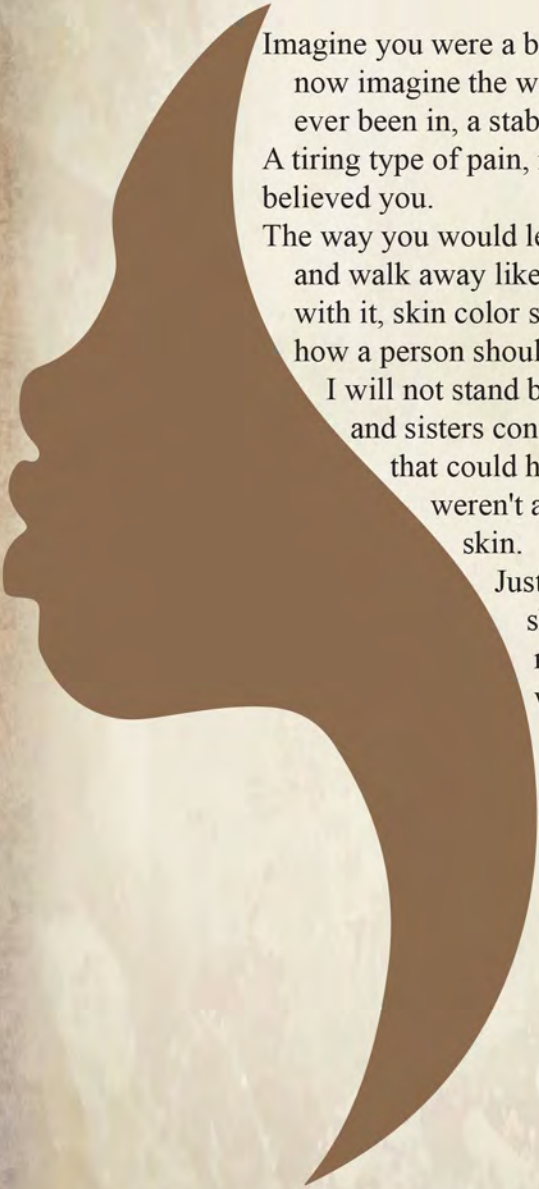
13th Amendment

Section 1. Neither slavery nor involuntary
servitude, except as a punishment for
crime whereof the party shall have been
duly convicted, shall exist within the
United States, or any place subject to their
jurisdiction.

Section 2. Congress shall have power to en-
force this article by appropriate legislation.

Being a Black Women in America

Sencere Plight



Imagine you were a black woman giving birth,
now imagine the worst stomach pain you've
ever been in, a stabbing type of pain

A tiring type of pain, now imagine if no one
believed you.

The way you would let someone die
and walk away like you had nothing to do
with it, skin color should not determine
how a person should be treated.

I will not stand by while some of my brothers
and sisters constantly die over health issues
that could have been solved if there
weren't any dislike over a person's
skin.

Just because you see multiple
shades of brown does not
mean their blood is the same
way.

Did You Know, America?

Caden Sherman

Do you know what it's like to

GROW UP BLACK IN AMERICA??

Sometimes it's difficult, walking around constant fear
I may not make it home to my family.

I wonder if George Floyd was scared

like I have been scared

He was a Man

He was a Friend

He was a Father

More importantly "He was a Human"

He was out one day

then BOOM!

His life was taken away

by a white police officer

8 minutes and 46 seconds.

I cried like a young boy does when his dog dies.

Welcome to America

Where slavery was legal, but not fair

Where after slavery, Black people are arrested
forced to work

here BLACK LIVES are just a tee shirt slogan and a hashtag.

Do Black Lives really matter?

The justice system doesn't care about BLACK PEOPLE!

Thousands of Black people have been lynched.

Black people are being arrested

Build more jails

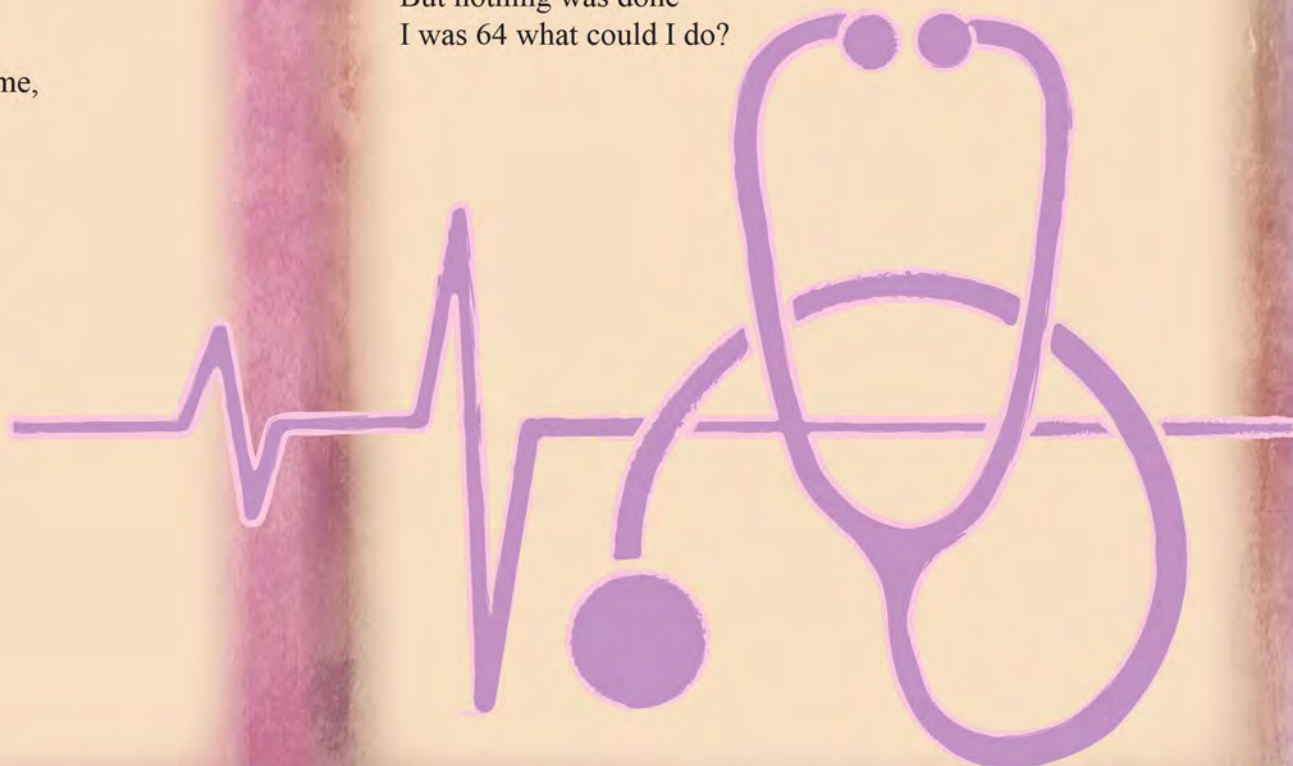
To make more money

What could I do?

Lana Price

The doctors never gave me the help I need,
Health care just wasn't open to me.
They told me
I didn't have much longer to live
I cried and cried
They told me I suffered from heart disease
I pleaded for treatment to heal my body
But I was 64 What could I do?
I could feel the pain in my legs and arms
But I was 64 What could I do?
I was too old to be healed
Too old to get treated
But what could I do?
Growing up, there were no grocery stores near me,
I lived in a desert
Fast foods were my only option.
I wish I could go back to those days
Before my body was filled with pills and shots
I wish I could fix my neighborhood
Demand better food for myself, for my family
Before it was too late.

In my thirties and forties
I drove hours to get to the doctors
They wouldn't give me the help I needed
They said go home and get some rest.
So I did.
I should have done something before it was too late.
But now
My body's dying
Laying on the hospital bed
Relying on the hospital machines
Not knowing how much longer I had to live
This could be my last breath
I pleaded with them to do something
But nothing was done
I was 64 what could I do?



It's Just the Beginning

Alayasia Waters-Jones

Do you know what it's like to be living in a world where
people do not accept you because of your skin color?

It feels like...always having to look over your shoulder.
It looks like "routine" house calls gone violent
It sounds like..whispered voices behind your back

It's like treating an individual differently because of their
race. It's scary how a police officer whose job it is to
protect and serve can tell you to freeze in a moment and
in the next instance shoot their gun
and all you hear is boom.

In your mind you are scared and thinking about your family
or someone you love to help you.

The Fugitive Slave Act rewarded law enforcement
who captured and returned people seeking freedom
They did not protect people

One hundred years later
After Emancipation
law enforcement was used to enforce Jim Crow laws
They did not protect people

I want to tell you a story of Breonna Taylor.
Breonna Taylor was a 26 year old woman,
who did not get a chance to think about her family
in her last moments because one night Breonna was sleeping
in her bed when an officer wrongly barged in her house
(BANG) and shot her.

This tragic incident has sparked protest and marches
across the world
But nothing has changed.
The cops aren't even fired.

Breonna had her whole life ahead of her, like the officers'
who killed her.
But she didn't get to live it.
But she didn't get to live it.
I wish Breonna got to live a full and exciting life just like
Harriet Tubman.

Sandra Bland, another young black woman arrested by the
police at a traffic stop. Her death was ruled suicide, but
her family thinks murder.

We want the truth.

We want the truth.

I wish Sandra got to live a full and exciting life just like
Harriet Tubman.

Their names are different but the stories never change.



Say Their Names

Kani Wells

Do you know what it's like to be black in America?

being scared to look a white person's way- Emmett Til

being scared to fall asleep in my car - Rayshard Brooks

being scared to go to the store with
a 20 dollar bill- George Floyd

being scared to fall asleep in my own home-
Breonna Taylor

Being scared to stand in my grandmothers back yard-
Stephon Clark

Being scared to make the wrong u turn- Miriam Carey

I am black but I'm scared.

I'm scared that when you look at me you think ghetto

I'm scared that there will be no more angry voices fighting
for our lives

I'M SCARED

I'm scared because i see white faces taking our lives

I'm scared that there will be no justice for Deon Kay,
a young black man

I'm supposed to be proud to be black but truthfully

I'm black and I'm scared

So I ask again do you know what it's like to be black in
America.

It's being scared to live.

That's what it's like to be black in America.

SAY THEIR NAMES



Will you help us fight?

Kolby Whitener

I will not stand by while people of color are getting shot
I will not stand by while people of color
are getting falsely accused
Do you know what it is like being an African American being
called a criminal just because of the color of your skin?
Or how it is walking in the street without people assuming
you are about to steal their purse, or kidnap them? Cops
tackle you to the ground, like they are some kind of
football team.
The wail of sirens is what I hear every night
Why can't the community accept my people
and the color of our skin?
Is it really fair that when a cop kills a person of color
they don't get charged for murder? -
When a person of color commits a crime,
they are already guilty
when they step foot into a courtroom.
Let me tell you the story about George Floyd.
George Floyd was a 46 year old who was viciously murdered
by a white police officer.
The officer put his big fat knee on George Floyd's neck
like he was nothing.
I guess saying "I can't breathe", doesn't mean
nothing to a police officer.
Another example is Emmet Till, who was only 14 years old
when he got lynched and shot in the head.
The liar of loose lips has finally spoken the truth
and told the reporter that it was a lie.
This is not right.
Will you help us fight for peace and equal rights?

Our Community

Malik Williams

I want to tell you the story of how Black people
don't make it to where they want to be.
How Black people are kept from growing and becoming
leaders in our community.
WORK
It is a lot. You wake up in the morning tired.
You get fired for sleeping at work.
Do you know what it's like to focus on your school work
when important things are going on in the world?
In the news today I see people breaking into the Capitol
and the police didn't even try to stop it.
School can be hard and annoying but
I know I need to get enough education so I can grow and
become a leader in my community.
In the world I see people work a lot to feed their families
and pay their bills. Overpowered people shouldn't be
taking under powered peoples' land. People with power
shouldn't be taking away access to education, or
housing. This causes a struggle for everybody.

Imagine a world where we all get equal access to
education. It's hard when you focus on the wrong thing
or stop doing the work

When I grow up, I know I will be a basketball player who
helps people that are going through struggle. I will
donate to the homeless and people who need my help.

Why life is unfair being black in America

Cash Wilson

Life is unfair being Black in America.
I don't need to be black to understand this fact.
History hasn't changed as it should have.
The American flag is a weapon,
Used to divide, not unify.
Flags used to destroy property, to vandalize.
Smashing windows, its a deadly weapon.
A flag that should represent unity.
Life is unfair being Black in America.

Civil war
Civil rights movement
What was the "civil" about these times?
Life hasn't changed as it should.

A black community in the government's hands
Poisoned by lead-infested water
Our government should be like our parents
They should care for us and protect us.
This shouldn't have happened.

Police, politicians it's their job to protect
But they are unprepared, and they should be prepared

Be ready
Be prepared to act as you should to help fight for this unity.
Make sure to use your voice to unify
We have the power to make a change

Our Broken System

Debanee Winslow

I feel like that's wrong because they use that as an excuse
because our skin is a threat to them.
I think that the way we can get justice is not by protesting,
but coming to an agreement.
I know that a lot of racism still goes on till this day.
I want it to be different , and I want us to come to peace.
I wish that we can have the same privileges
that white people do.

I see that dealing with housing in this country isn't easy.
I feel that it's wrong because they deny us loans
because of our skin,
I know that the government knocks down buildings without
our consent, homes where families lived for a long time ,
From redlining to gentrification, families are forced out
of neighborhoods and into debt.
I want it to be different.
I wish that the government wouldn't just throw our people
out like we are trash.

I want communities to feel safe and diverse.
I wish we could stop getting judged by our skin tone.
We need to put our thoughts together.
We need to unite.

Bottles of Pain

Celina Zhang

Dear Doctors,

You've let me down so many times
So why should I trust you now?
Heading to the hospital I had no hope
Only pain, these thoughts had come up
Would I even be treated
Would I even be safe
Would I die now

Thoughts of Tuskegee
candy pills instead of medicine
just to watch us die..
The Flint water crisis
Their water poisoned
just to save money
I don't want that to happen to me

This feeling felt like a turtle that doesn't have a shell
Oh to my skin color,
this and many other reasons why
I wouldn't have much longer
So what could I do

I feel like I'm only on life support
Watching the IV DRIP down slowly
swallowing millions of pills at once
falling asleep,

losing consciousness slowly,
oh.. I feel like I'm dying...
I couldn't do much,

Tell me, what could I do
Nothing, but a patient pleading please
Oh help me, just help me I cried in pain..
but the nurse walking past
I feel silenced,
I feel dead,
I feel helpless
Knowing no one could hear me
Laying in my death bed..
Oh so tell me,
what could I possibly do..

