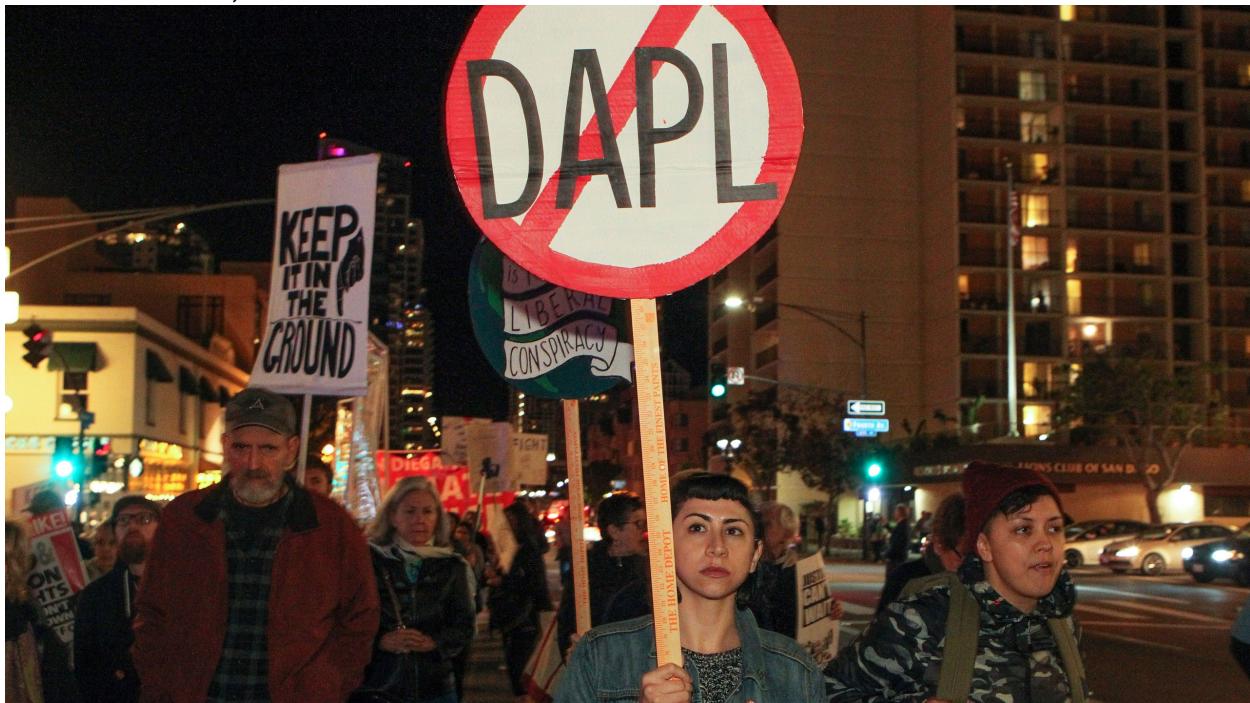


How I Relate to the DAPL Protests as a Black Woman

"I try my best to remind myself that quelling my voice helps no one."

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DECEMBER 2, 2016



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Dr. Maya Angelou once said, "History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlivéd, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again." I especially think of this quote after I watch the news to learn of story after story about [unarmed black persons killed by cops](#). I watched the videos of their deaths circulate across social media without a thought of their families or the [PTSD](#) that would likely occur from watching one of your loved ones die or be beaten into submission. When I watched those videos I felt physically ill. I felt like someone I knew and loved would be next, that it wasn't a matter of if but *when*. I thought that despite the psychological pain that the videos caused me, it was my duty to be informed.

This all changed when I woke up one week and learned of a new black death three days in a row. I couldn't watch anymore; I couldn't stand to see any more blood shed or parents crying while reporters pressed microphones in their faces. I read Angelou's quote three times on election day searching for a reason why the decision that was made was made on that day.

I turn to it when everything feels bleak, exhausting, and I feel scared. The truth is that I am petrified by the thought of living in an America that has chosen time and time again to not love me or the people who look like me. An America that [favors whiteness](#) and anything in proximity to it. An America that favors capitalism and the idea of the American Dream above the lives of People of Color, of a [school to prison pipeline](#) that keeps money in the hands of white elites and black men behind bars at alarming rates. We live in an America that is continually allowing the ugliest parts of history to repeat themselves. I stand with the [#NoDAPL protectors](#) because I know that the war they are fighting will be hard won, that the war they are fighting is not unlike the war that I, a black disabled woman, am fighting.

I have been asking myself for quite some time: Why does history seem to be repeating itself despite the fact that so many of us marginalized people are facing it with courage and resistance? As I watch the [Native Resistance](#) to #NoDAPL and the water protectors being massed and threatened with [physical violence](#) in the same way that [protesters of police brutality](#) against unarmed black women, men, and children are, I am reminded of the fact that we still have so much more to do. The burden is often on us to fight for our own communities and focus on the issues specific to us. And while I absolutely understand the importance of fighting for your own communities and working toward solutions that will help

your individual communities prosper, I believe that as marginalized communities we are stronger when we stand together.

In the face of an uncertain future under a Donald Trump presidency, I am completely with the #NODAPL protectors as they fight for their right to not only water, but their right to keep their land sacred and free of a pipeline that threatens their lives and livelihood. An oil pipeline that the [protectors](#) say threatens their public health, welfare, and cultural resources. After the [events](#) of Sunday, November 21st, the protectors faced increased violence from police. There were [water cannons](#) used on them in freezing temperatures and tear gas. However, I know that just because I am in full support of the protectors that their story is not mine to tell. In fact, my only job is to share the voices and work of Native people and I work hard to do so.

I often visit the website [StandingRock.Net](#) for the latest news and updates and the Twitter timeline of Dr. Adrienne Keene who updates their blog “Native Appropriations” with resources, photos, and other materials. Keene was recently on the [BuzzFeed podcast Another Round](#) where they spoke of the conditions and the way it feels to watch live streams of the people they know and love being pepper sprayed and harmed. Hearing Keene speak about this reminded me of the way I feel when I read about another black person’s murder, the anger and exhaustion of knowing that they won’t be the last, the frustration in knowing that I cannot physically be at these protests. I know that my body is not strong enough to attend the protests and that I am not mentally and emotionally strong enough to attend these protests. I feel like I am not doing enough by tweeting and writing words about the way I feel in this current climate. I try my best to remind myself that quelling my voice helps no one. I believe the same can be said for the voices of the #NoDAPL protectors.

We cannot let this fall to the wayside and treat it as if it is a passing occurrence. It takes courage to protest violence in the face of a country that [elected a man that the KKK endorsed] (<http://www.teenvogue.com/story/donald-trump-endorsed-kkk-newspaper-protests-dillard-university-david-duke>). It took courage to push back against the aforementioned violence and unequal rights put upon the leaders involved in the Civil Rights Movement. We have made progress, but we've got an even longer way to go. I do not want to end up on the side of history that belittled both the Black Lives Matter protests and the #NoDAPL protectors when all we are fighting for is the right to live and prosper. The human rights that are supposed to be everyone's— not just the white and elite. I stand with the protectors and the Black Lives Matter activists because we are simply stronger together. History cannot be unlivid; we cannot take an eraser to the parts we'd rather forget, but we can choose to learn from them, to right the wrongs done to marginalized communities and blocking the Dakota Access Pipeline is a step in the right direction.