

NOW WE RISE

BLACK LIVES MATTER ART JOURNAL



nowwe

A Magazine from the
John-F.-Kennedy School in Berlin



A Note to Readers

by Malka Beere and Naima Müller

Dear Reader,

In the wake of the murder of George Floyd, millions of people across the world have taken to the streets to demand justice for him and by standing against the systemic racism that plagues almost all aspects of American life. We have a duty to be a part of that movement.

We are an American school; our relationship to U.S. politics is therefore different than any other school in Germany. The same government that funds the police and prison system funds our school. Racism is a part of American history and culture; despite being an ocean away, we are heavily influenced by American culture.

JFKS is a German-American educational institution and, as such, bears a responsibility to thoroughly grapple with the oppression of Black people. A prerequisite for change is information.

We must act as a community because we are witness to a great injustice. We must go beyond education to action. We must not sit idly by as Black people are slaughtered in the streets.

This journal is a collaborative effort among student groups at JFKS to act. Contributing artists carefully reflected BLM. We seek to amplify their messages.

Visit haywire.now.sh to view this journal digitally. For additional student reflections on race and racism, visit jfksideas.wixsite.com/jfksideas to check out IDEAS Journal Issue 3 on Race. While you are there, listen to our panel discussion on biracial student life at JFKS and beyond.

We hope you respect our collaborative effort to demonstrate solidarity with the BLM movement. Please support our student effort to stand with BLM by purchasing this journal.

Print copies are available at school this week for a suggested donation of 5€. You may also order a print copy to your home by emailing daniel.lazar@jfksberlin.org with your name, address, and confirmation of a payment of at least 7€ to the IBAN listed below.

All proceeds from journal sales go directly to Black Lives Matter.

JFKS Student Activity Fund
DE69 1005 0000 1010 0078 20
Berliner Sparkasse,
Verwendungszweck/Note: Diversity Club (IDEAS) Supports BLM

This journal is our way to begin to confront racism in the US, within our school and local communities. It should start uncomfortable conversations, inspire further research, and most importantly, be only the beginning of a collective effort to discuss our role in systemic racism and our role in dismantling it.

All proceeds from sales are going directly to Black Lives Matter. Black Lives Matter is an organization in the US that also has global campaigns. It creates petitions, organizes rallies and protests, funds affiliated grassroots groups, and educates the public. Its focus includes police brutality, mass incarceration, immigration and economic justice.

We heartily encourage contributions which meet or surpass the suggested donation from those who are able. Donating is a perfect way to show your support for student activism. Donating shows that you respect the hard work of JFKS students and that you support civil rights and community activism in the United States. Whether you are reading online or in print, please PAY WHAT YOU CAN for this journal!

We challenge you to use this opportunity as a springboard to further education and action.

Malka Beere and Naima Müller on behalf of the National Honor Society



Art by Ella Jackson

Simile

by Joshua Weiner

I could feel his hand coming over my hand.
It's not a haunting, it's just something that happened,
like a five-year-old holding on to Hulk Hogan.

Did he have a gun? It was still the unknown.
His power a paragon sharpened on a touchstone
to cut down a five-year-old holding on to Hulk Hogan.

Let me see your hands! He does a stutter step,
his hand in his waistband; I keep it on my right hip.
I just want a normal life, that's it. That's it.

Night hangs upon the eyes that see the darker man.
Rain swells the tongue; speech is jargon.
Just like a five-year-old holding on to Hulk Hogan,
I felt like a five-year-old holding on to Hulk Hogan.

"In August of 2014, Officer Darren Wilson of the Ferguson, Missouri police force, shot and killed Michael Brown, an 18 year old unarmed African-American, by unloading his ammo, 12 shots total. Recalling the altercation between him and Brown in a television interview, Wilson used extraordinary language. The poem, "Simile", works with the language material voiced in that interview."

Joshua Weiner is an American poet and former JFKS community member. A Guggenheim Fellow, Joshua Weiner serves on the MFA faculty within the department of English at the University of Maryland.

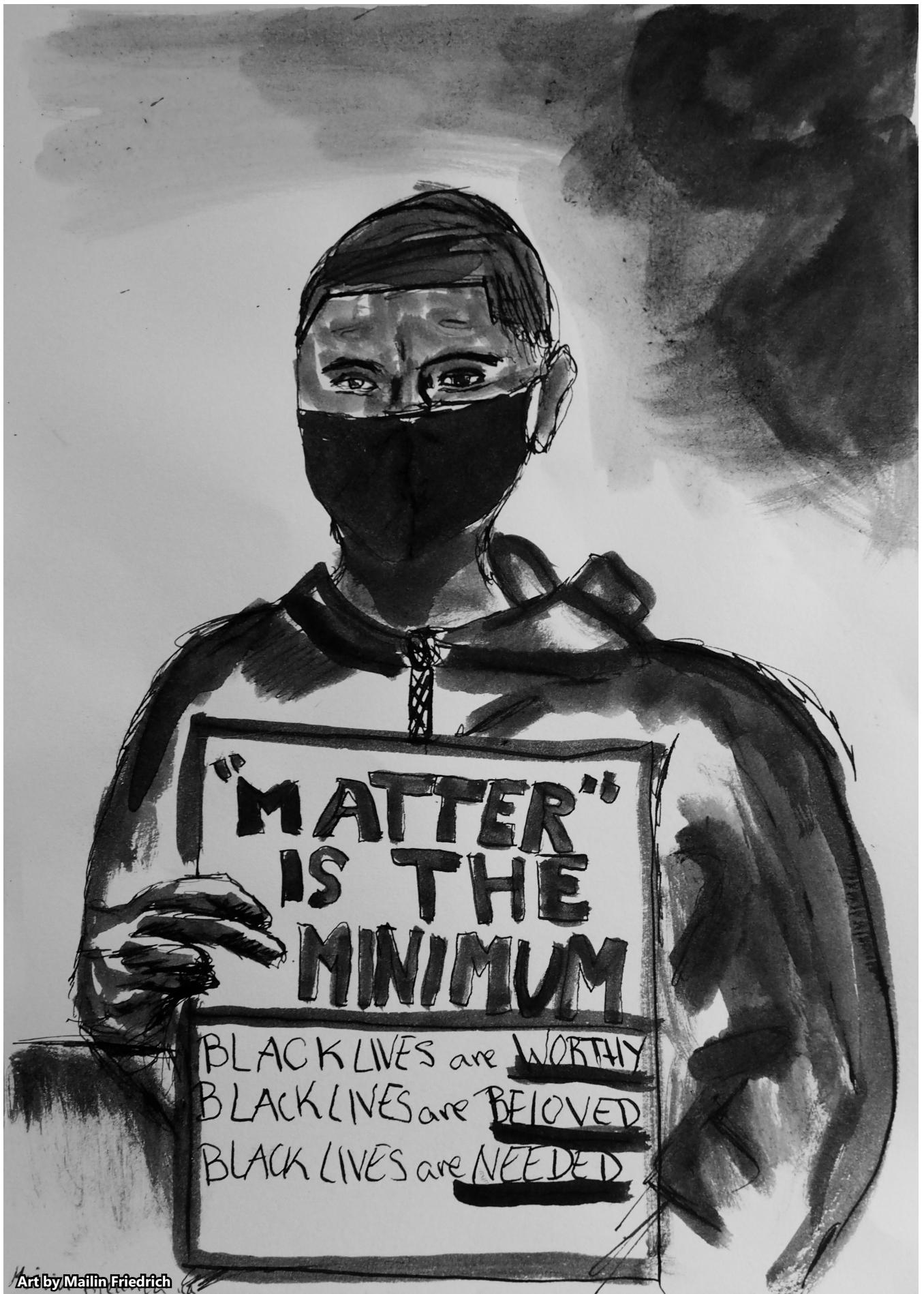






Photos by Kelli Montgomery





A Call to Action, But What Action?

by Malka Beere

In the wake of yet another killing of an innocent black man by the police, waves of protest have crashed through the US. The murder bears unmistakable resemblance to the murder of Eric Garner who's last words were also "I can't breathe" as he was choked to death. In 2014 this became a rallying cry. Now it is again. Berlin has been host to protests in his memory. There has been an outcry for change. But there has been more than just an identification of the sweeping, long-overdue reforms to policing and other institutions that have sanctioned and even furthered racism, there has been a call to action.

As Desmond Tutu, South African activist, says: "if you are neutral in times of injustice you have chosen the side of the oppressor". White silence, white compliance, is responsible for racism in the U.S. It is not solely responsible, maybe not even primarily but it is certainly a force that has too often been ignored. With inaction you have not fulfilled your moral obligation to society.

I am frustrated by instructions on how to be an ally. They often include recommendations for research and organizations to which to donate. Reading a book and informing myself still seems passive. This is not to say that one should ever be done learning about Black history. Education is the foundation for action, but just reading books and watching movies does not satisfy the need for change. And there needs to be change. Short of becoming a lawyer or politician what should the average (white) civilian do?

I do not claim to have a complete or even a satisfactory answer to that question, but I must ask it. I could list all the policy changes that need to happen, not just in policing, but most aspects of government, but this article would turn into a book. The best way for a civilian to affect policy change is to vote, but we are students, so for most of us that's not an option. Although we can donate and protest, we are limited by Corona and pocket money.

One of the most important things that has to change and that we have control over is our identity. There needs to be a national reconciliation that goes back to the roots of white supremacy: slavery. As Ta-Nehesi Coates puts it, "If Thomas Jefferson's genius matters, then so does his taking of Sally Hemings's body. If George Washington crossing the Delaware matters, so must his ruthless pursuit of the runagate Oney Judge."

As we are a German-American school I think there is a perfect analogy here. Many Germans must grapple with the fact that their ancestors were Nazis. The way in which one confronts that ancestry ultimately makes a great deal of difference to how one is disposed towards systemic issues born in that time.

We now eagerly set out for change, forgetting how grueling it is. There will be no glamour in activism and there should be no self congratulations. Even the great civil rights martyrs like MLK and Malcolm X did not reap personal benefits from their cause. MLK was imprisoned, investigated by the FBI and eventually killed. Civil Rights Leaders regularly die for the cause.

And now as police are firing at peaceful protests, there is no safety in doing what is right and there never has been. But these hardships are all the more reason to act.



Art by Felix Barkow





Art by Naima Müller

What George Floyd Deserves

by Marian Bothner

Marian Bothner is a JFKS alumna, now a rising junior concentrating in Philosophy at Harvard university. Her studies concern the intersection of economics and personal belief systems. She is the Managing Editor of the Harvard Political Review, from which this is excerpted. The following article was originally published on May 30, 2020.

Five days ago, George Floyd, an African American Minneapolis resident, died after being arrested and subjected to lethal violence at the hands of local police officers. Officer Derek Chauvin pinned Floyd's neck to the ground while three other officers stood guard, despite clear evidence that Floyd did not resist arrest. The now-viral video clip shows Floyd pleading for his life, repeatedly saying "Please, I can't breathe." Since Monday, Floyd's murder has ignited a maelstrom of protests in Minneapolis as activists demand justice for Floyd. These protests, the likes of which arguably have not been seen since the protests in Ferguson following Michael Brown's death in 2014, have continued nearly non-stop since Tuesday, resulting in numerous arrests. Just yesterday, Chauvin was taken into custody by the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension and charged with third-degree murder.

Thousands of miles away from the deadly incident, I, like many others, have watched its aftermath play out over social media, across news headlines, and in conversation. With the footage of Ahmaud Arbery's murder fresh on our minds, there is an eerie familiarity to the public grieving of injustice. Surveying social media, I see countless tributes to Floyd: stylized illustrations, messages of anguish, and images of protest. Alongside these tributes, there has been a concerted effort to channel "social media activism" into tangible action, such as contacting the Minneapolis District Attorneys or donating to Floyd's family and to the Minnesota Freedom Fund. More than anything, the public outcry has called for a concerted, holistic response to George Floyd's murder.

President Donald Trump, for his part, has seized

the opportunity to seed yet more violence. In a Twitter thread from yesterday, President Trump targeted individuals who have looted local Minneapolis businesses during the three days of protest. One tweet said, "These THUGS are dishonoring the memory of George Floyd... Any difficulty and we will assume control but, when the looting starts, the shooting starts," invoking the infamous words of Miami Police Chief Walter Headley who was known for targeting African Americans in the 1960s. Twitter has since flagged Trump's tweet for "glorifying violence," while critics have questioned the constitutionality of the President's call for lethal force. Thus, in a moment of glaring incompetence, insensitivity and irony, Trump's idea of "honoring Floyd's memory" amounts to merely fueling the very police state which precipitated his death. The president's remarks typify the mired, atrophied and tactless response to the murdering of Black Americans that has persisted for far too long.

Anyone who has been following the news remotely will know that Black Americans have been policed, and even killed, for all manner of innocuous acts. Now, during the pandemic, African Americans are at particular risk of over-policing; evidence shows that Black Americans are many times more likely to be arrested for social distancing violations. On the very same day as Floyd's death, New York resident Amy Cooper made headlines for threatening to call the police on an African American man who was bird-watching in Central Park. As commentators noted, Amy Cooper's false claim — "I'm going to tell them there's an African American man threatening my life" — very well could have resulted in a deadly police altercation. We would be wise to remember that Floyd was killed after police were called to investigate his alleged use of a counterfeit \$20 bill. Eric Garner, whose death popularized #ICantBreathe, was killed for selling untaxed cigarettes in another borough of New York City.

And even if the police officers in question are fired, as in Floyd's case, there is often no mecha-

nism for barring them from law enforcement; many officers guilty of misconduct are routinely rehired or otherwise absolved of wrongdoing. As the Floyd family's lawyer and civil rights attorney Ben Crump asked in a recent statement: "How many 'while black' deaths will it take until the racial profiling and undervaluing of black lives by police finally ends?" All signs suggest that, with the pervasiveness of racial prejudice and systemic discrimination, the end may be a ways off still.

Thus, Floyd does not merely deserve our shock and dismay — he deserves our informed commitment to thorough-going racial justice, for him and for those like him. As we know, Floyd's death, tragically, is far from anomalous. We ought to see his murder as one of countless instances of violence, suppression, and injustice, predating the founding of this country. In past years, each documented death marked a warning post that could have catalyzed structural change but was thwarted by failed reform and protracted apathy on the part of those in power. We owe it to Floyd not to let his death amount to one more unheeded warning, but instead to pioneer a project of racial dialogue, disarm the police and carceral state, forge a path towards economic equity, and secure the political representation of Black Americans.

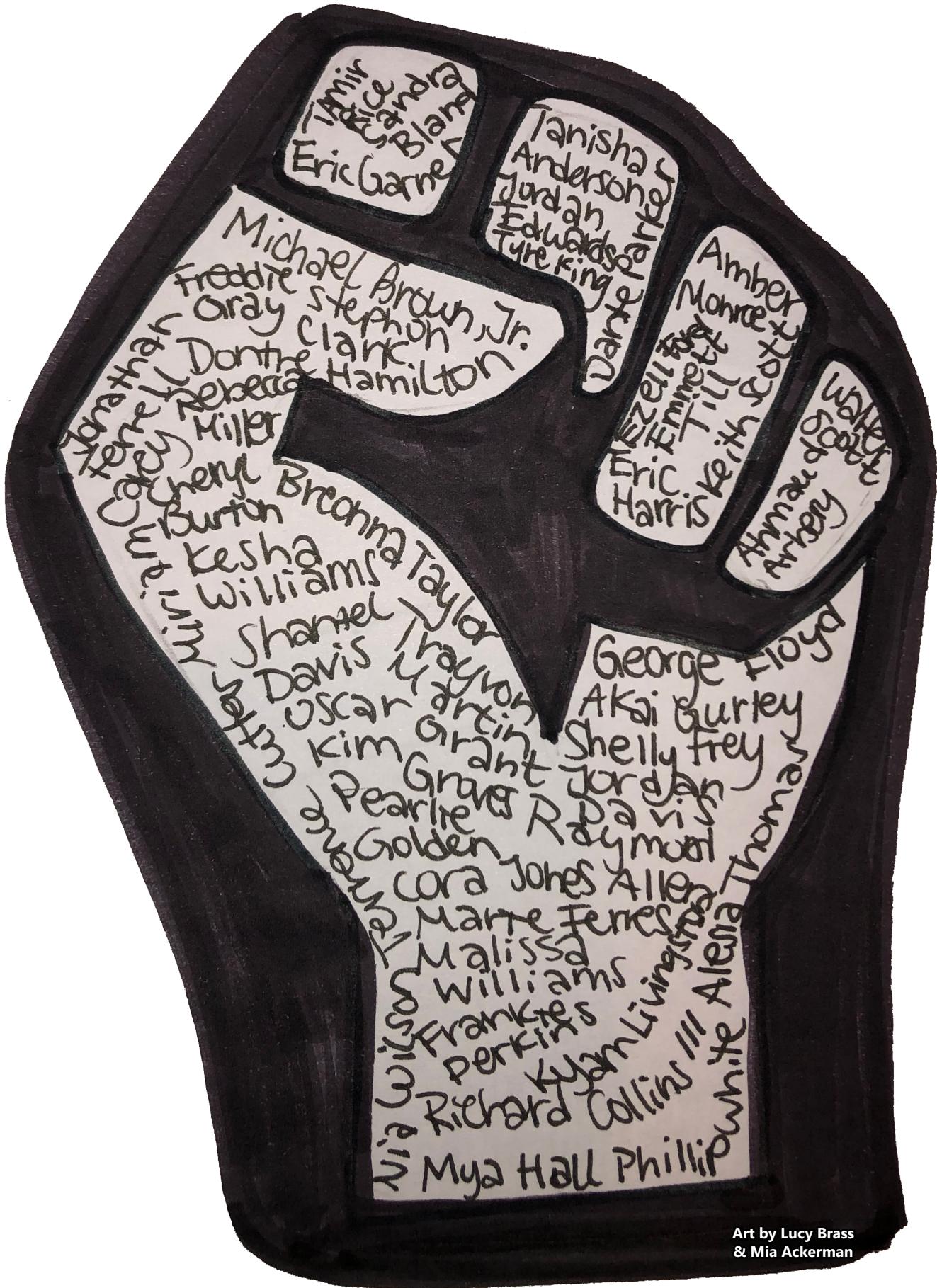
Floyd also deserves to be remembered not just for how he died, but for how he lived. There is a certain perverseness to the excessive sharing of the footage of his death, often without content warnings or caveats. In fact, in a recent interview, Floyd's family members describe how they cannot bring themselves to watch the graphic video of their son's death. Moreover, in the rush to print stories on the incident, several news articles misspelled Floyd's name as "Lloyd," signaling yet more disregard for the man behind the footage. At the very least, we must treat Floyd's life, in its entirety, with the utmost sensitivity and respect. As testimonials from family and friends reveal, George Floyd was a father, a star football player, an aspiring musician, and an irreplaceable member of his community.

We owe it to Floyd to memorialize his life even as we demand justice for his death. For the protestors, this means balancing the need for political agitation with non-violent methods to the best of their abilities. On Thursday, in a meeting of organizers and faith leaders at Greater Friendship Mission-

Baptist Church, Floyd's family urged protestors to demonstrate peacefully. In her remarks, Floyd's girlfriend of three years, Courteney Ross, said, "Waking up this morning to see Minneapolis on fire would be something that would devastate Floyd," explaining that while she shares the protestors' frustrations, the demonstrations ought to avoid violence. Her sentiments were echoed by Floyd's brother, Philonise Floyd, and Crump, who told protestors "we cannot sink to the level of our oppressors, and we cannot endanger each other as we respond to the necessary urge to raise our voices in unison and outrage."

With Chauvin's arrest now underway, we find ourselves at a watershed moment. Now is the time to turn our attention toward monitoring a fair and just prosecution process that can serve as a model for holding abusive law enforcement officers accountable. Ultimately, we owe Floyd more than procedural justice; we owe him a sweeping program of racial empowerment and reform — the kind which could have prevented his death.

George Floyd deserved to live in a country where Black bodies are not policed and jailed en masse. He deserved to live in a city that does away with generations-old systems of housing segregation. Floyd ought to have been able to live his life free from the specter of police brutality, White supremacy, and racialized violence. He deserved to live a life replete with opportunity, security, and dignity. We owe it to George Floyd to do better by countless other Black Americans precisely where we failed him.

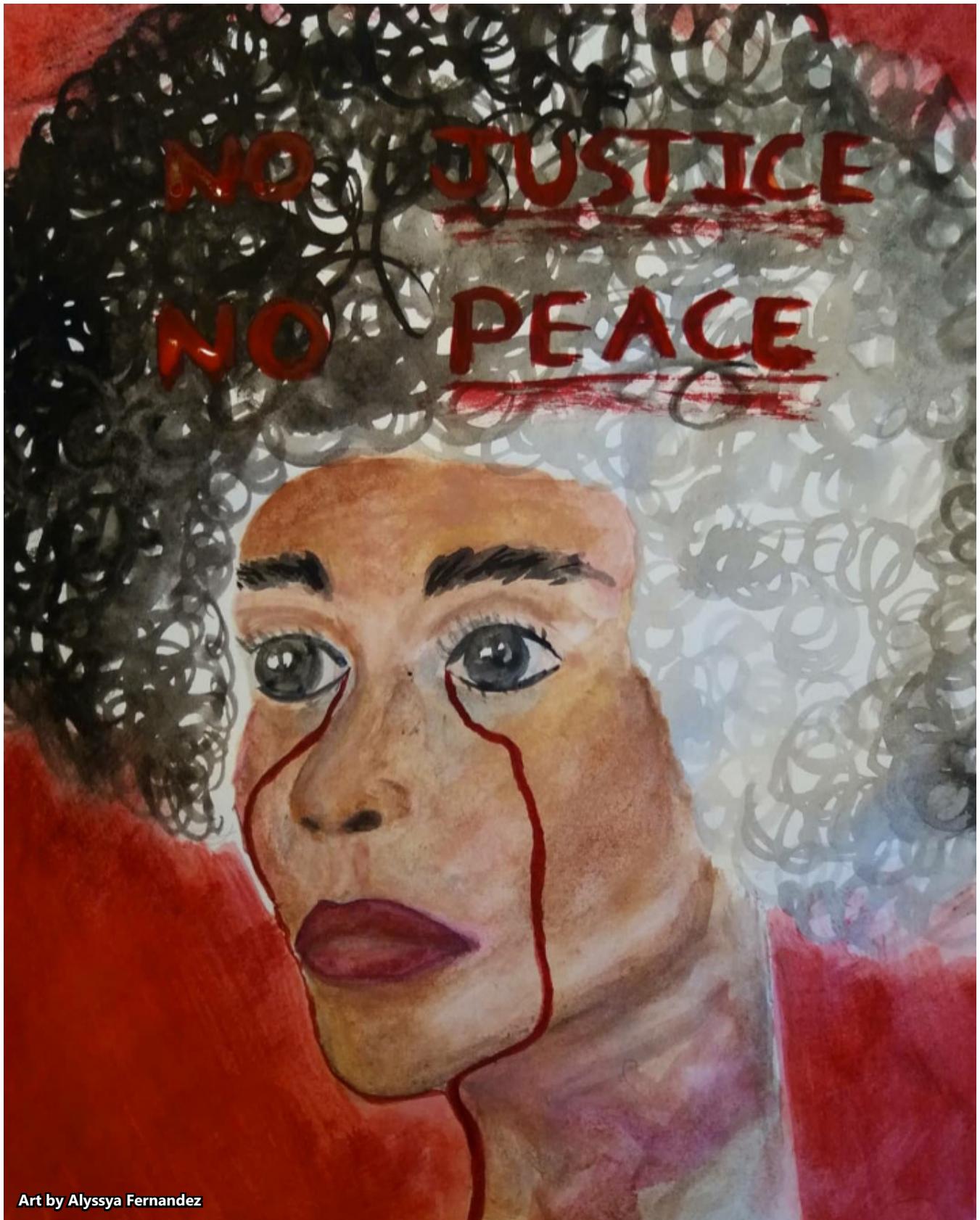


Art by Lucy Brass
& Mia Ackerman



Photos by Amy Byle





What Matters

by Ángel M. Larriuz, JFKS English and Spanish Teacher

We hold some things quite dear, while others fail to register even over time.

For example, the year 2020 matters - and it's not even half over. We currently bear witness to the clarion call for justice, for dignity, for an end to police brutality. And above all, we clamor anew for a reckoning on the matter of racial discrimination as one of the core elements of life in America and beyond. Once again Black folks form a tragically ironic vanguard in America, a focal point in the twisted experiment in civic society euphemistically called the United States. Its most recent grisly roll call of racist slayings - more often than not at the hands of public servants - has left in its wake a global outcry primal in nature and raw in effect. This may finally be the moment when the promise of our purported republic receives its due.

Naturally, such a watershed affects everyone differently: rage, grief, and despair, come to mind, as do compassion, grit, and awareness. Our reactions matter greatly in that regard, whether in the realm of the mundane or on the exalted plain of ideals. For while not mutually exclusive, those individual responses noted above (and others) will help to determine our collective future. Perhaps the most extraordinary aspect of these unprecedented developments has been their decidedly grassroots nature, or as they are wont to say in the US, "people voting with their feet". And the overwhelming take on the current state of affairs there has been the need for resistance, for everyone to take a stand, a refusal to continue "going along to get along" in spite of the uproar. We can no longer afford to look away from the calamities that characterize our nation - and the world at large. Detachment simply won't do, no matter how busy we think we are, regardless of how uncomfortable the very notion of engagement makes us, the daunting specter of squarely confronting human nature notwithstanding.

Racism stems from ignorance, fear, hate, and greed: a pernicious stew of bigotry that poisons the body politic and nourishes our basest inclinations. Yet, a remedy for that bane readily lies within our grasp, that of interpersonal communication. Dialogue remains the greatest resource, the most powerful

weapon, in this war for humanity that compels us to actually face one another, to take stock of ourselves with a ruthless eye for the unvarnished truths that fester within us while we hold everyone accountable - both as individuals and as peoples. Only by bursting the bubble of circumstance, by moving beyond race, gender, and wealth to genuinely transformative encounters borne of shared experiences, can we have any hope for reconciliation (much less reparations). It never ceases to amaze me how little we know about each other - or even care to, really. We can protest about civil liberties and political rights, about police brutality and economic inequality, but ultimately, if we remain ignorant of each other as individual human beings with loves and losses, triumphs and dreams, challenges and regrets - we simply have no basis for true understanding or cooperation.

This is not a knock on protests, by any means. Nor should legislation, occupations, or elections be deemed invalid (any more so than writing a song or creating a sculpture). What matters is for us all to find a way to shed the conformity that binds us to rancid structures and bedeviled behavior. A scourge this foul must needs have a compound cure. Do not mistake these mild words for acquiescence: my initial bloodlust has abated; not so, my outrage. Similarly, while hope in humankind appears difficult, it remains both possible and necessary. Of course, these words must be coupled with action for anything to change. But such change becomes our shared responsibility: no one else can be expected to "serve and protect" us - or our democracy.

Black Lives Matter!

To even have to utter such a phrase belies the quixotic state of our society. In fact, it bears repeating: Black lives matter.

You matter.

So do I: I'm not a figment of your imagination.

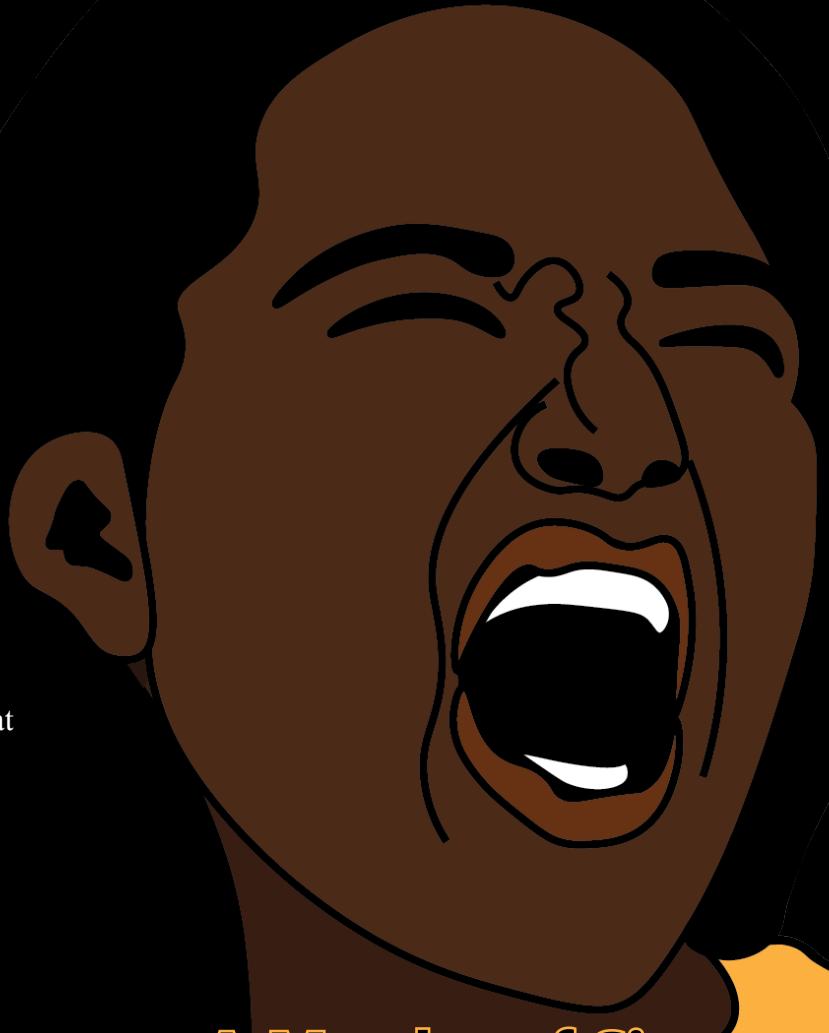
So That the Faith Was Refired

by Ella Jackson

So that the faith was refired
Dragged down the grey river
Drowning the last glows of light
Dripping from their rags
Onto ashes of spines once broken
And worn out structures
A hoard of cigarette butts
Create a wall of smoke
So that the faith was refired

So that the faith was refired
Like a singed match
And a scorched torch
The hopeless shall be hopeful again
The gazes of the famished filled
With the glazes of the flames
They will lift heads over the smoke of defeat
And the river of extinction
So that the faith was refired

So that the faith was refired
The hungered kindle reignited
By the reunited faces who spit a glimmer
To the flames that devastated lives
The smiling skulls brought into sparks
And the cities glowed once more
A beacon of light shot into the night
Dispersing blazes among all
So that the faith was refired



A Murder of Sirens

by Jannes Kelso

As I roam the streets, with poster in hand,
I enter the realm of a foreign land.
How privileged I am, unaware of this war -
Been waging for ages and will be more.

The smoke of destruction, the gas of farewell,
Rolls over the nation casting a spell.
Balaclava with visors dot the hellscape
Firing "less lethal" bullets while feeling their cape

Proud, peaceful marches come to a halt
Badge numbers covered so no one's at fault.
"Mavericks and outliers" "Not trained as they act"
One day these "anomalies" will be question of fact.

A murder of sirens serenade their prey
They've brought all their toys - it's time to play.
Raw, mangled throats gurgle last pleas
And so strange fruit festers on sidewalks not trees.

Art by Liliana Walker

Interrogation

by Liliana Walker

what do you do it for?
who do you do it to?
why this?
why now?
where do you keep your heart
besides your chest?

your time is a precious resource
your thoughts are money
in someone's pocket
your dollars are someone's boots
on the ground
whose?
do you know?
do you care?

who do you live for
besides yourself?

a life is a precious resource
closed eyes are someone's body
on the ground
whose?
why them?
why then?
why?
do you know?
do you care?

are you listening?



Barricade

by Benjamin Rubloff

This was the first painting I made after Trump's election in 2016. It's based on an image of a street barricade from a protest in a seemingly more volatile part of the world. Many people saw the writing on the wall: that nationalism, racism and sexism were going to be tolerated in this new era of American politics. At the time that I painted it, it was a metaphor for struggle and self and communal preservation; behind barricades resilient and progressive societies can take form. I never really expected to see the kind of sustained protest that we have seen in the last weeks. I am heartened that so many have risked their health, and their lives to stand up and say Black Lives Matter and seek to dismantle systemic racism in the U.S.



Trucks on Fire Series (see next pages)

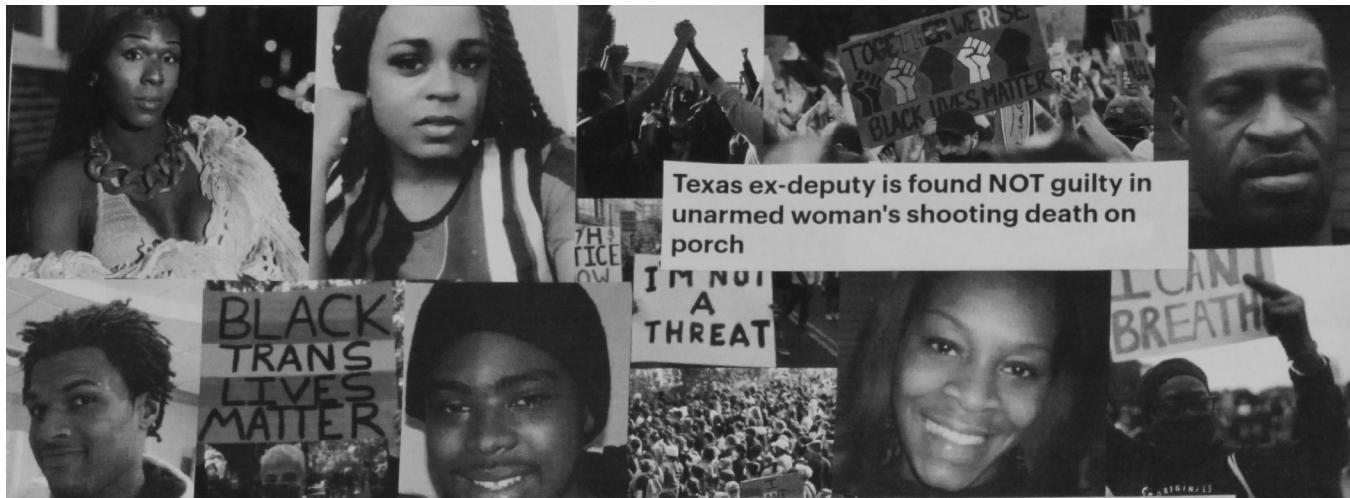
by Benjamin Rubloff

This was perhaps an angry vengeful response to Trump's election. In 2016, I painted a series of pickup trucks on fire in response to the toxic white masculinity that seemed to be on parade in the popular politics that brought Trump to power. In the election, and in attempts to de-legitimize the recent protest, white masculinity has revived as a force that is disruptive, violent, and intent on preserving privilege. As a white man, I think a very important part of addressing racism today is to address the history of how whiteness has been constructed; too often it is a seemingly invisible background, which is actually a characteristic of its insidious power.





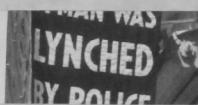




Texas ex-deputy is found NOT guilty in unarmed woman's shooting death on porch

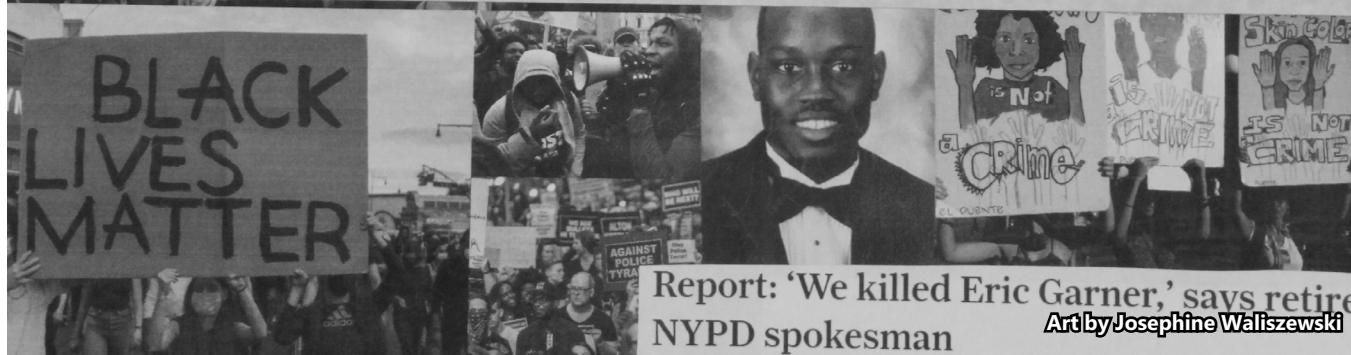
BLACK LIVES

he was only a baby': last charge
opped in police raid that killed
eeping Detroit child



Police Kill 16-Year-Old They Say
Pointed a Handgun

MATTER



Report: 'We killed Eric Garner,' says retired NYPD spokesman

Art by Josephine Waliszewski

The Danger Behind the Message of “Tolerance”

by Stephen Lee, JFKS Science Teacher

As a Korean-American, it is impossible to hide my squinty eyes from the general public.

I start this story in this way because we all would like to think we meet people on common ground from day one, but this is simply untrue. The very observation of this attribute has altered every initial interaction I have ever had in my life with complete strangers.

Imagine meeting someone for the first time. This conversation. What's your name? Where do you live? What do you do for a living? Where are you from? No, where are you REALLY from? North or South? A seemingly harmless set of questions.

As a first generation Korean-American, it is difficult to explain the cultural identity issues that arise growing up in America. So when people who do not have a cultural identity crisis insist on imposing their own seemingly harmless interrogation, they are not the ones demonstrating tolerance, I am.

I'll give you an example. I am a prolific scuba diver. Last Christmas, I was on a Red Sea diving cruise with 23 other divers. One of the crew members, an Egyptian, would greet me every day in the same fashion. Each morning I made coffee, each time I suited up to go on a dive, each time I returned to the boat, the greeting was always the same. He always greeted me with an enthusiastic “Jackie!” A reference to Jackie Chan. So imagine me on this boat in the middle of the Red Sea being greeted 3-4 times a day in this fashion for 12 days.

I didn't make much effort to blow up at this person because for one, I'm on vacation and I don't want to expend unnecessary calories over someone else's ignorance. The first time this occurred, I had to make an instantaneous calculation over the amount of effort necessary to correct his behavior and the amount of effort needed to get to know this person to have a conversation about why his greeting people this way was ill-advised. Other factors played into this calculation, such as if it was worth ruining other people's diving experience just to address a racially uninformed Egyptian crew member along with the potential negative consequence of dealing with a crew member whose reaction to confrontation was unknown. After this instantaneous calculation, I opted to let it go.

Here's the problem with “tolerance”: the burden falls entirely on people of color to fend for themselves. Again, there were 23 other divers on this boat that could have done or said something, but opted (like myself) not to engage. Perhaps they thought they were exercising their own version of “tolerance” towards this behavior? It is hard to say, and I can't accurately speculate.

The problem with tolerance from the point of view of an observer is that the underlying dynamic is asymmetric. As the demographic in power, white Americans demonstrating “tolerance” is essentially a message equivalent to, “Yeah, we will overcome the inconvenience of your existence. We can tolerate a little diversity here.” This is not the best message to send.

As we were leaving the boat I shared what this crew member was doing with another diver. They were shocked and claimed they never noticed. Imagine my squinty eye roll... a seemingly harmless side effect of tolerance messaging is that it is incredibly passive.

Let's be clear, you can bury your head in the sand and make it look like tolerance.

I know “tolerance” has been commonly used to promote the acceptance of diversity within communities, but it's a terrible word to use. Readers should understand that invasive curiosity, silence, and ignorance are not synonymous with tolerance. I share this because people need to see that this “tolerance” message is not received the same way because what we tolerate are not the same things. Think of it this way, despite being welcomed on board, I was the one who had to tolerate this behavior.

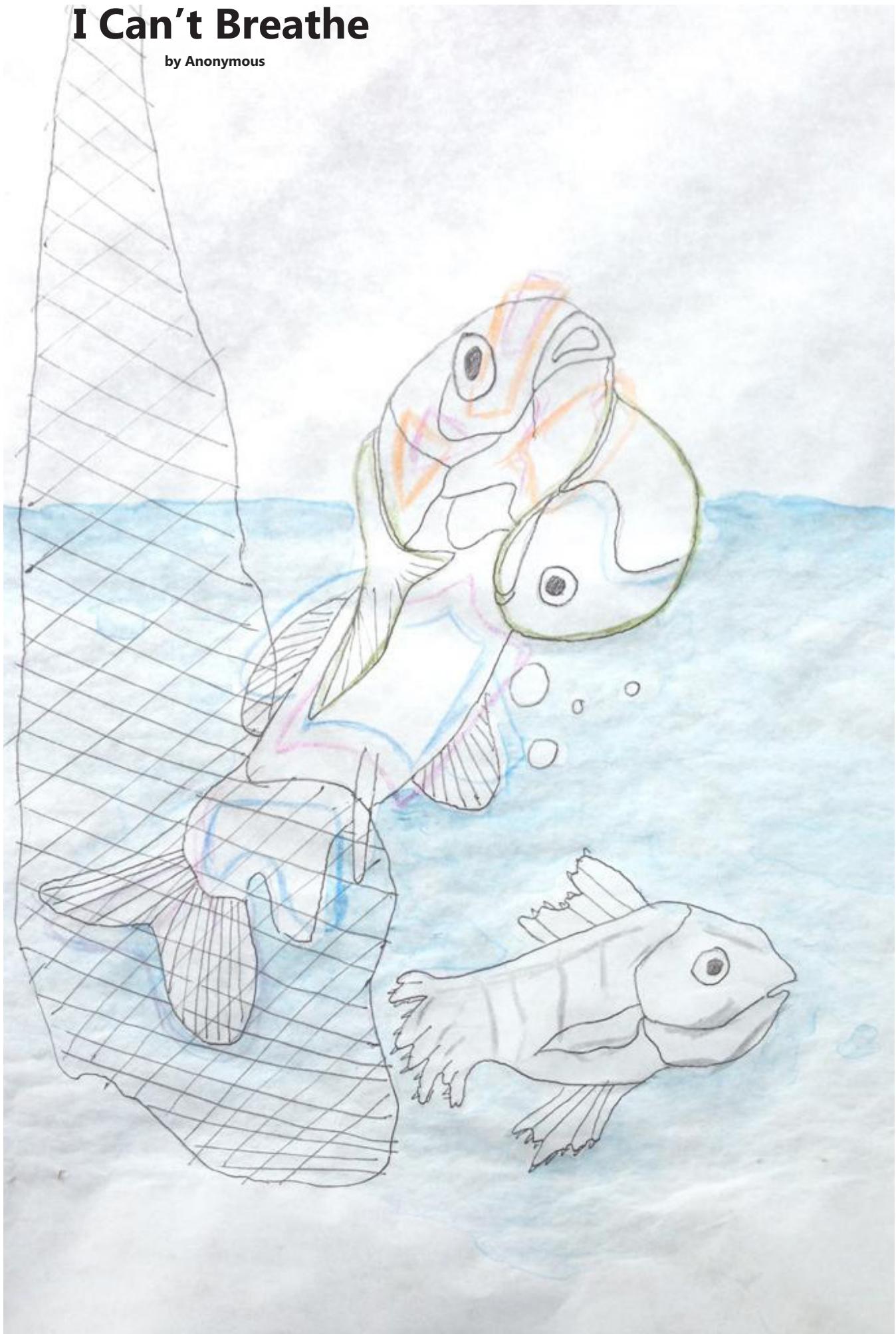
So my question is, what is ultimately tolerated about diversity? Why are we using this wording to kickstart conversations about diversity and racism when the burden of tolerance falls exclusively on the shoulders of those who are oppressed? Why are we using (or encouraged to use) resources from sites like tolerance.org without first discussing this word as an asymmetric interaction from the onset?





I Can't Breathe

by Anonymous





STAND TOGETHER

Art by Hannah Cook



A Publication of the
John-F.-Kennedy High School
Teltower Damm 87-93
14167 Berlin, Germany

PROJECT LEADERS
Malka Beere
Naima Müller
Liliana Walker

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF & LAYOUT
Liliana Walker

HAYWIRE, IDEAS, AND NHS LEADERS
Hannah Cook
Ella Jackson
Jakob Reuter
Josephine Waliszewski
Liliana Walker

CONTRIBUTORS

Mia Ackerman, Felix Barkow, Malka Beere, Kyla Borschel, Marian Bothner, Lucy Brass, Amy Byle, Hannah Cook, Alyssa Fernandez, Mailin Friedrich, Mary Gromis, Mathilda Gross, Ella Jackson, Jannes Kelso, Ángel M. Larriuz, Stephen Lee, Kelli Montgomery, Naima Müller, Benjamin Rubloff, Josephine Waliszewski, Liliana Walker, Joshua Weiner

COVER ART
Jannes Kelso

AVAILABLE ONLINE AT
<https://haywire.now.sh/>

INTERNET COORDINATOR
June Gromis

FACULTY ADVISORS
Lee Beckley, Haywire
Daniel Lazar, NHS & IDEAS

Published in Germany
Summer 2020 (June 23, 2020)