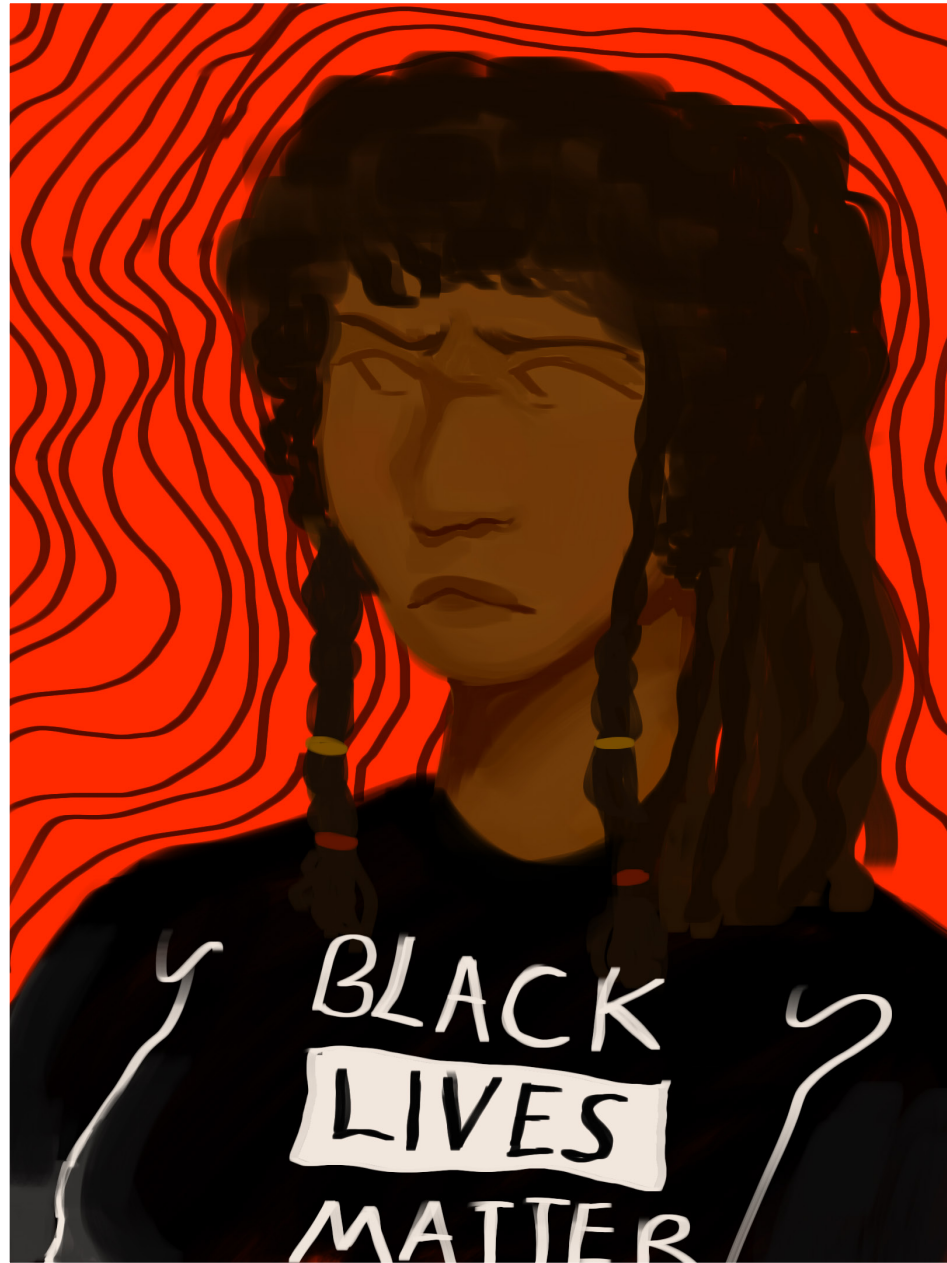


I MATTER



Project Coordinator: Isabella Hanson | Cover Art: Gabby Jones Fields



Gabby Jones Fields
8th Grade

SPONSORS



I launched this idea to help process the pain I and other African Americans felt after watching the killing of George Floyd. On this journey, I was truly touched by the support from so many amazing people, artists and organizations. Thank you Firyal Alhossain, Antoine Phillips and Gregory Wright at Gucci, Joshua Murphy at Ideas FWD and AnnaLise Hoopes at The Changemakers Project for believing in my vision and for supporting Black Lives Matter. Your support has meant the world to me. Thank you to the contributing artists Cavin Jones, Machumu Freeman, Kelly Lattimore, Adrian Meadows, Krystal Quiles and Food Stamp for bringing the message of hope and equality through your medium of art.

A very special thanks to the three judges that selected the final winner - comedienne Torrei Hart (you inspire me), hip hop icon Kool Moe Dee and singer extraordinaire Tamara "Taj" Johnson-George. There were so many amazing entries that made your task daunting. To my fellow students, I am humbled by your talent and the emotion behind your words. Please keep writing because your words have power!

Isabella Hanson
10th Grade



"This has been such a tumultuous year, that I was excited to learn that Isabella Hanson, a 14-year old student, created a forum for young people to express their feelings about race, social justice and current events. The "I Matter" contest entries were extraordinary and give me hope that our youth are poised to take action and bring about the change that we desperately need. It was an honor to be a part of this important and worthwhile endeavor."

Rob Covington
Houston Rockets
NBA



Thanks to the Team Judging Review Committee at Gucci:

Julia Meyer, Team Coordinator

Faria Alam

Joey Barbasa

Deandre Bingham

Kiana Brooks

Barbara Brambilla

Angelica Carpo

Tony Davis

Mary Chmilariski

Angela Hill

Joseph Juarez

Amanda Knipp

Bobbie Krieger

Derrick Liu

Joana Marquez

Robert Matencio

Melanie Matkin

Blake Matthews

Diana Murphy

Ayodele Oladipupo

Jamal Pace

Jae Park

Sylvia Rivera

Anna Spector

Rose Villanueva

Tawny Ward

Teri Yanagawa

FINAL JUDGES



TAMARA "TAJ"
JOHNSON-GEORGE



TORREI HART



KOOL MOE DEE





KQ

Krystal Quiles

HEY GOOGLE

Khabria Fisher-Dunbar, 12th Grade

Hey Google
What are some images of three black teenagers?
Oh no I didn't mean mug shots
I meant black teens laughing, hanging out with their friends
For recreational purposes
Not selling drugs or stealing
Just living their lives

Hey Google
Where is a safe place for black people to live?
Yes, I need to know this information
Even though everywhere should be a safe enough place
Why is the only place people think of is Africa?
Even though some people there hate us too
I wonder what we did
Did we offend anyone?

Hey Google
How likely is it for a black woman to die during childbirth?
2 to 6 times more likely than their white counterparts
That's high, don't you think?
So what do we do if more of our mothers are dying; how do we repopulate?
Oh I forgot they don't want us here
So they'll find any way to kill us off

Hey Google
What are some hairstyles for curly hair?
Whoops my bad I forgot to add the "black girl" after that
Is this hairstyle professional enough,
Or do I have to straighten it again?
Are my curls too much?
Do I have to change my hair to prove my submission to your culture?

Hey Google
What's the black national anthem?
Lift every voice and sing
We still have to sing because no one hears us
When singing turns to screams are we still invisible,
What do we do?
As we are shadowed beneath thy hand
Our problems get overlooked because we are the oppressed
But black lives are equal to all lives, right?

Hey Google
Is it bad that I have to fight for my people?

Hey Google
Who is Breonna Taylor?
Who is Ahmaud Arbery?
Who is George Floyd?

Hey Google
Why are there so many names that I can't fit them all in one poem?

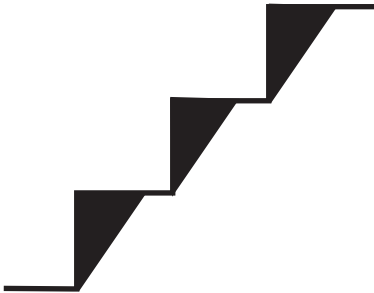
Hey Google
Why are black children forced to grow up sooner?

Hey Google
Why do I have to be twice as better
Don't you know that I try my best and still get talked down on

Hey Google
Why can't black lives matter?



GAN I



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Machumu Freeman".

Machumu Freeman

I CANT BREATHE

Sanai R. Eaton-Martinez, 12th Grade

I can't breathe
I can't breathe
I haven't been able to breathe since I was born
When society decided the melanin in my skin was not something to be uplifted but a tragedy to be mourned
I'm still struggling to breathe
Because even though my people were the ones to build this country from the ground up
"Our country" is the first one to tear us down and crush us down to dust
The dust that's making it harder to breathe
Ever since I can remember, beauty has always been straight hair, thin, and white, white and more white
Six years old me looking at Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty and Snow White
Trying to hold back my tears and tryin to breathe with all my might
Cause I thought I had to be corrected, thinking that that was beautiful, me needing to be made right
At six years old I couldn't breathe
My mother told me a black woman's hair is her jewel
It's wonderful, gorgeous, and can be used as a powerful tool
But when my white friends would skip me on the traditional braiding each other's hair
I would run my hands through My coarse hair and not care
Not care about my Angela Davis Afro
Or my Queen of Sheba braids down my back
I thought I wanted to straighten my hair "I hated being black"
Society was tricking me making me think my hair was weighing me down, tellin me "stop breathing. Don't breathe"
And then sitting in class listening to slavery and segregation
Because no one likes to tell us that we were Kings and queens before then
My teacher expects me to know everything and nothing at the same time
I can't think. I can't be heard. I can't breathe
And not only am I black, I'm too black. Too dark to be seen but dark enough to seem suspicious.

Just cause I can't be seen in the light
Doesn't mean I'm the symbol of evil or I'm the one that got in a fight
The darker the berry the sweeter the juice
Drink it and maybe then I can take my first breath, maybe then I can actually move
Finally, i try to catch my breath, make a peep, or even just a sound
But Y'all wanna act like I just beat you senselessly
Threw you in some river, to watch you drown
When that's exactly what they did to me, did to us
Because when you chain up human beings like animals, ship them like cargo and strip them down naked who wouldn't make a fuss?
They were forced to decide that death was better than bondage.
They couldn't breathe and neither can I.
My ancestors didn't fight so hard and long so that we can choose not to kneel because our story isn't told in "our" country's song
Speaking of kneeling
Speaking of fighting
Speaking of breathing
I don't want a knee on my neck
I don't want a gun held to my back
I don't want to be hunted down like deer
I don't want to live in fear
I don't wanna be another hashtag
I don't wanna be a trend
Because all trends end
Mr. Floyd, Mrs. Taylor, and Mr. Arbery your lives will be remembered forever
Though tears will never stop being shed over your deaths, you have brought everyone together.
For better or for worse, we're starting to make some noise, a lot of noise
Maybe justice will be served, maybe All lives WILL matter
And maybe, just maybe I can finally start to breathe



Mel B-S
10th Grade

THE SONG OF OUR ROOTS

Angeles Mejia-Sierra, 9th Grade

Roots run deep into our veins
For centuries our roots have
Sunk into our souls

Our African roots,
Sink into our hearts and our voices
We've never stopped singing our roots.

For 401 years since we've been stolen
From our homeland,
We never stopped singing.

Even when our women were raped and our men,
Slaughtered and lynched
We never stopped singing.

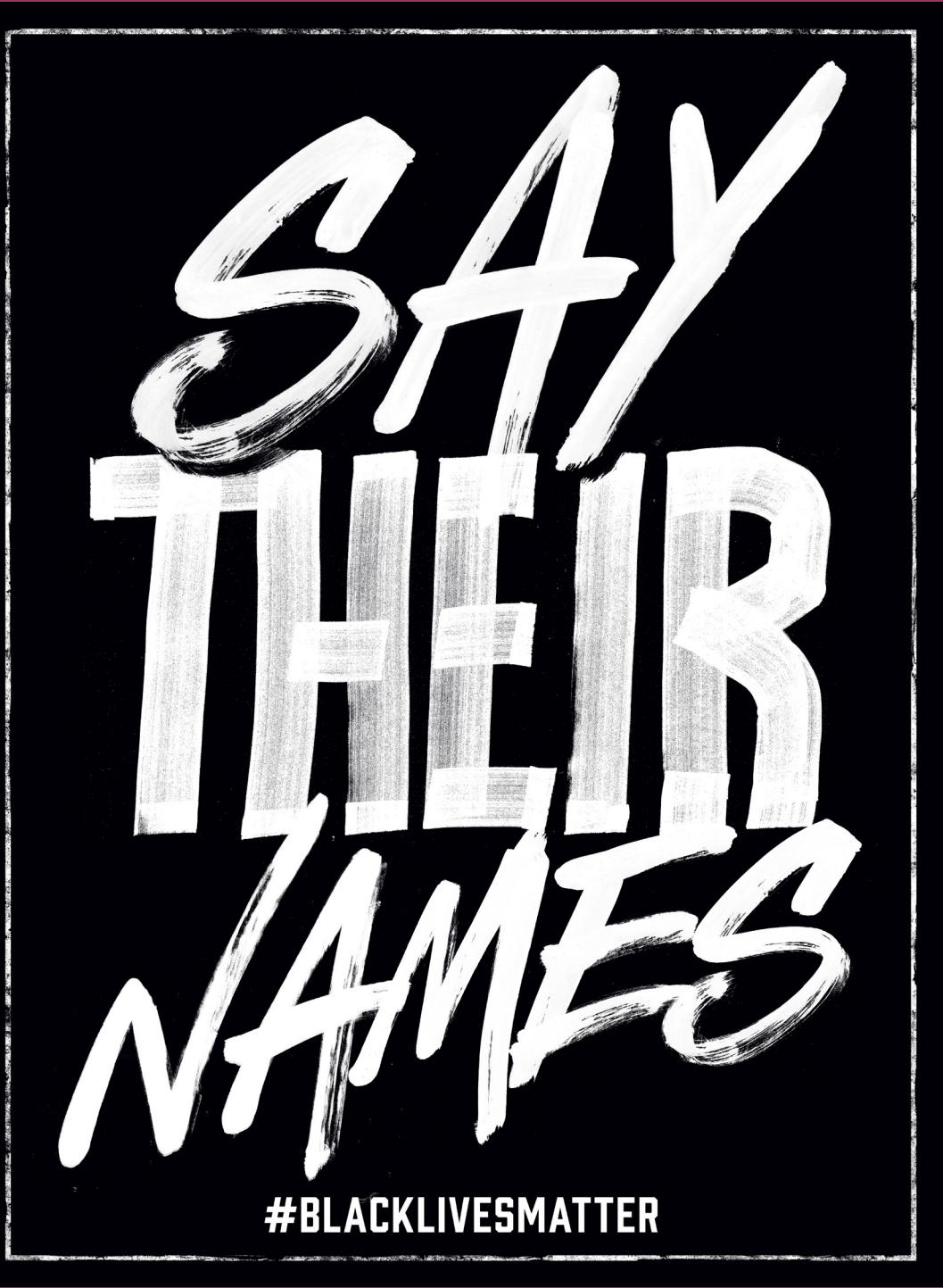
Even when we were hosed down, degraded
Treated like dogs and attacked by dogs
We never stopped singing.

Even when we were forced into the ghettos,
And our money was stolen,
Snatched from our fingers,
We never stopped singing.

Even when we were silenced,
We overpowered their system of hatred
Made them release their suffocating grips from our
throats,
And we kept singing.

Even now, as our innocent brothers and sisters are
murdered,
At hands of those who have sworn to protect and
serve,
We shall see their faces, we will know their names!
We will hear their voices!

We will hear their song.
The song we've never stopped singing from the
start.



Adrian Matthews

WELCOME TO 2K20

Milka Amare, 8th Grade

Get set it poses a threat
Depending on gloves,
Aprons
And masks
To complete our daily tasks
A double crisis
Of both Health and Injustice
Floyd
Arbery
Taylor
knees on their necks
Bullets through their heads
But listen they weren't a threat
Please I can't breathe
My stomach hurts
My neck hurts
Everything Hurts
They're going to kill me
Were Floyds last words

To some, he was only a number
To some, his life didn't matter
Protests after protests
Only to make the
Little peace scatter
A country in need of a leader
Not one that walks away
But shows the way
Out of the crisis which we could
Be guided away
I say
To win our rights
We need our voices heard loud and bright
Don't hesitate
There are protests out there
Waiting for you to participate
Go out there
And educate



Cavin Jones

WHY

Livia Charles Basche, 5th Grade

Why are some
So afraid of change
The songs of freedom
Couldn't even imagine
A different world
Where all Are Equal
Truly
It baffles
But truly
They are

And why do others
Say they're Not
Can't
Couldn't Be
Prejudice
Towards the black sons and daughters
Of our nation
When they themselves
Are the columns
Upholding systemic racism

And why
Yet others
Be so open
Good
Pure
And willing to advocate for themselves
They are the victims
Of the systems
So they take a stand
Hold their heads high
And lead us through
The stormy skies

And why
The police
Killing the backbone of America
They are hurting
For
What is a sword that is doomed to turn itself
On the wielder
But a misguided soul
That can only do hurt
Until it heals

And why
Are beautiful, magical people
Ridiculed
Killed
Tortured
All because
Of racism
That a force
This filthy
Is so strong
Can't be
Take out the supports and the castle shall crumble

And why
For what is racism
But a carefully balanced structure
A cage
We need not the hammer
We need
The key
To unlock the cage
And set ourselves free



Adrian Matthews

BLACK LIVES MATTER

Sarah Ahmed, 8th Grade

The biggest war is not one we've studied
Nor the ones we know.
Perhaps it's one that's in the present
One that we've watched grow.

We've waged a war between ourselves
That we can't even see.
A war we're all the victims of
Longing to be set free.

A war that does not only use weaponry
Because our words have become knives.
We're divided because of how we look
And now we're taking lives.

Our world is burning down in flames
And we're the ones who set the fire.
Still we cannot recognize our own mistakes
And the situation is getting dire.

The world is full of color
Yet we only see black and white
Even children are caught up in the chaos
Because we've taken away their rights

The ones who are there to protect
Have not proven themselves true.
Why do you have to kill someone
To realize they have blood like you?

So now, before it's too late.
And our future begins to shatter.
It's the time for us to learn a lesson
All black lives matter



Julissa Gama
8th Grade

SAME FLESH

Jay the Poet

Same flesh just a different blend
Tell me what the difference is
You can't accept our differences, obsessed with your privilege and blinded
by your power so your actions are belligerent.
I HAVE A QUESTION!
Is it our lives or all lives?
If there's war are we allies?
Is (His)story all lies?
Cause man my life you gotta pay for it
Nothing in this world is free
So tell me what my life's worth
Momma why don't the lights work? If there were jobs then I might work
Pressure is building up I think I...
I think I might burst!!
So in the eyes of a young black man trying to survive in a society that's not
on his side it's TIME for a REVOLUTION
My WORDS the ONLY SOLUTION
Cause fighting never worked, that always gets us hurt or it might just make
it worse.



Julissa Gama
8th Grade

UNTITLED

Charity Fisher, 11th Grade

As a young black girl, I struggle.
I struggle to find my identity in a world that doesn't even accept me.
A world that hates me.
A world that just doesn't want me.
I struggle to live free,
because my skin color automatically shackles me from opportunity.
When people see me, they don't see my beauty or my brilliance.
All they see is the color of my skin.
And how that makes me this disgrace.
Another stereotype.
An animal.
And with all of that negative energy that's directed towards me,
it's just so suffocating.
Sometimes it's just so hard to breathe,
because it's like I'm not really free.
And that's all I truly want to be.
All I want to do is live free,
and be free to breathe.
Without supremacists and racists going out of their way to oppress
me.
The scary thing is,
I feel most free when I'm not breathing.
When I'm fighting to hold my breath to prove that they can't
intoxicate me.
That they can't control me.
That they just can't make me.
And when I let go and breathe again,
I just somehow feel like I'm relinquishing my freedom.
You would think that because we're in 2020,
the injustices and enslavement, both mental and physical,
that African Americans face would be gone by now.
But it's 1619 all over again.
Our jails are modern day plantations.
Our communities are still segregated and most predominantly Black
communities are still in poverty.
Our beautiful Black boys and girls' worth now equates to those of a
property.
It's like, when will it be enough for them?
When we're all put away in a cell?
Killed?
For we built the foundation of this very country.
Without us, there would be no U.S.

Without us, there would be no culture.
Without us, the world would just be a blank canvas waiting for that
little speck of color to touch it.
Sometimes I dream of a world where our white counterparts were as
adamant about helping us,
as they are of getting rid of us.
And not that all white folks are bad, because some are really tight.
But it's just so hard to distinguish between who is real and who is
not.
But no more.
Enough is enough.
George. Breonna. Trayvon. Freddie. Kalief. Sandra.
And countless others.
They died undeserving deaths.
Preventable deaths.
Deaths that happened simply because they were Black.
And we will not let this go on any longer.
We are tired of seeing all of our incredible and beautiful people be
taken out and disposed of like trash.
We are tired of screaming "Black Lives Matter!"
While ignorant people scream about how "All Lives Matter!"
But how can all lives matter if our lives just don't?
We are tired of history repeating itself, and now we are coming.
We are coming stronger than ever,
active as ever,
educated as ever,
and we will not let up the pressure until we are all free, and receive
justice!
So to all of the supremacists,
racists,
homophobes.
Killing us may make you feel liberated in your privilege,
but deep down we all know that you're pissed.
You're pissed because you didn't get the blessing of Black brilliance
and resilience.
The gift of melanin and greatness,
and it pisses you off because you know it's something your privilege
will never allow you to buy,
or gain,
or learn.
No amount of privilege can give you what my people have.



Jenesis McCraw
2nd Grade

MY SKIN IS MY SHIELD

Ashlyn Poppe, 12th Grade

One.

My skin is my shield
Milky white
The reason I am safe at night

It is why people look once
But never twice
A shield for which others pay the price

A built-in advantage
It is present from birth
Seizing opportunities
Without knowing what they're worth

I have never been profiled
Been denied the benefit
Or accused of a crime that I didn't commit

Band-aids come in my color
But they cover up no scars
Because I live in a world that is mine, but not ours

Two.

The news is on
And the stories are gritty
Reporters say the protests
May come to my city

Media coverage
I've seen few times before
The cameras constantly rolling
Scary scenes that sear my core

I see fires of frustration
And robberies of rage
In the span of a few hours
A weighty issue takes the stage

A riot is what happens
When the silence doesn't work

When you only give concessions
The final prize will still lurk

A long awaited breach from silence
That headlines scramble to cover
America becomes less beautiful
When we oppress the pieces of her

Three.

Your dark skin
A testament to your history
Which is my story too

My white skin
A testament to my privilege
Which is not yours to share

Your skin is art to me
Revealing your strength
Insurmountable

Your skin is music to me
Songs of your courage
Melodies deep within your complexion

I cannot deny
That my skin is my greatest asset
But I am ashamed of what my skin
Is capable of

My skin has the power to enslave yours
But also to free it
My life will be full of change
Rewriting your history
Which is my story too

Race is not chosen
It is assigned
And I am writing our new story
One that is colorblind



Food Stamp

DEAR AMERICA

Saira Sarfaraz, 12th Grade

Dear America,
I want to love you.
Pretend your faults don't exist.

Forge a baseless pursuit of pride into existence
While I dwell in the blind comfort you assist.

But I cannot leave a silent trace
Where I dismiss my moral responsibility.

I want to believe in a place
In which color invites no hostility.

I must pursue the spark within.

One I cannot articulate
But allow to grow slowly and surely.

For the state of unrest
Is what brings change.

Dear America,
We must forge a reality
Where we reside in harmony.

HONORABLE MENTION

Danielle Sunseri, 11th Grade

Where is there to look
When the "hero's" the villain
When the "killer's"
our children
Oppressed for
The skin that they live in?

Where is there to go
When the people
are yelling
And there is
no telling
When there will be justice?
I guess they think it's a trend
But this doesn't end
When the posts go away

Why is there silence
When there is the violence
Happening in our streets
And the murderers Are still
out There for you to meet
When the cases
Are failed to reopen
And we are just hoping
For a change.

Where was the justice for Tamir?
When he was just playing
For George who was saying that
He couldn't breathe?
When Breonna was sleeping?
When Ahmuad was keeping
His peace?
The charges were all at none
And the person who held the gun
Is the one that is supposed to protect

Where is the justice?
What about peace?
What would you do if it was your
Cousin? Or Brother?
Your Niece?
Would you still stay silent?
Would you still not chatter?
Put all aside because
BLACK LIVES MATTER.



Food Stamp



London McIntosh
6th Grade

Erinda Ratchford, 9th Grade

Fists in the air
Skin black like our hair
What they don't have they take like it's theirs
Bullets in our bodies
Blood in their hands
Mugshots not taken and they walk like its fair
Our anger is all consuming
It's not ok because justice isn't looming
My heart hurts when our heads are pushed into the ground
And no change has been coming around
From Georgia to Minnesota and all around the world
People are marching because our voices must be heard
All lives do matter we're not saying they don't
But all lives will not matter if black lives still won't



Kelly Latimore Icons