

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Kenya Burton: “For George Floyd”

Kenya Burton · Tuesday, July 28th, 2020

For George Floyd

Help me...
I can't breathe...
He's going to kill me...

Trigger finger, counterfeit bill, telling the officer he can't breathe 15 times, one time too many.
Taking another black man's life

Eight at night, eight minutes of pleading, a two-minute video, one body to be buried.

A cop with hands in his pockets and a smirk on his lips
Pointing like Columbus finding land that did not belong to him
And you still proclaim his innocence

You will move on to the next story
While we scrap our men off of the streets
You let a guilty man go
While we pick out a casket
You give him bodyguards to protect him
While we choose his pallbearers

We are being gunned down like dogs and they still have the audacity to say racism doesn't exist
Say that this system wasn't built from the bodies of our sisters and brothers
Say I'm angry, say I'm vicious, say that I am an animal so it makes it okay to kill me.
They use our deaths to teach us lessons,
Don't talk too loud
Don't fight back
Hope that they get off of you before you take your last breath

You have a bulletproof vest and still, our phones prove no protection
We can catch our murder live and you would call it fabricated
Understand that your story will never just be yours
Your movement will become theirs

Turn our black lives matters into all lives matter
 Because when the topic is not on them they fill shadowed
 You can't be the main protagonist without a white companion
 If you hate this country so much why stay in it

Take this knee and call in unpatriotic
 Call us scum
 Tell me to go back to my country when this country is more mine than yours

Kaepernick got blacklisted and a cop gets repositioned
 Takes a manhunt to bring a suspect in
 Only did something when we saw the footage
 We can have a group of Nazis walk down these streets and receive no punishment
 But fight for the lives of black people and let the squads in

You want this skin but not the condition
 You want the show but not the credits
 You want my mouth but won't take this medicine.
 In your vocabulary injustice is called compromise and justice is special treatment.
 One voice and make it 3/5ths of a person because it is easier if you can make a black person less than a man.

And they wonder why we only rise in numbers
 We are only seen as people when we are groups
 You hunted us down for centuries
 You beat us. You lynched, you raped our women and children and we ask you equality and they give us bondage
 Accept these conditions or fall victim
 We want to live but you want to finish what your ancestors started

You killed someone's **son**, you killed someone's **daughter**

You tell us to get over it after you wash off the blood
 Paint over our memorials
 Make us watch as you erase us

Word of advice
 Show them that the inside of your palms are the same color as their skin
 Don't do anything that will make them want to come in
 They will cut you open to see if you bleed the melanin you are so proud of
 My mother told me from a very young age that you must respect authorities
 Never speak too loud

If a cop stops you don't do anything to scare him
 Look down and stay quiet
 DO anything you can to make it home
 Don't make a mother bury her child
 Apologized for my flesh, sorry that her loving a black man gave me a death sentence
 Be good, and get home safe

One of my worse fears is bringing a beautiful black boy into this world that I will have to fill his bedtime stories with warnings and package his lunchbox with silence and submission. I will have to raise two different people, his blackness and the image.

That he will turn on the tv years from now and say why do they kill us

I will tell him he needs to love his pigment and he will say it makes him a target

I will try to show him how to love his hair and he will say that it feels like rope, tastes like heritage.

When the teacher asks him what he wants to be when he grows up, he will say old.

That he will look at a textbook and see our murders

Wondering when he will get his plot

I will have to tell him what my mother told me

They will see your skin as a weapon, your voice ammunition.

Cover up but keep your hood down, hands up and don't make a sound

If you are too loud they will kindly compare it to the sound of their bullet

Ask you if black people are so fast why didn't you dodge it

Is this what they call family traditions?

My culture was erased by privilege and now it feels the only thing I can pass down to my children is this noose, this gun, this knee, this barbwire

Maybe one day he will stumble upon a story

A man with the name of Floyd, the marches that were held in his name, the air that his people breathed for him

When we got tired of being polite

Tired of being peaceful when a protest becomes a murder technique

Angrier about a black man taking a knee against brutality

Then a white man taking a life

This is not just in Minneapolis, it is our neighborhoods

One day I will look at my beautiful black boy and pray that he makes it home. That he doesn't run into the law.

I have found that I have come to fear cops more than burglars

We don't call to have the fire extinguisher in case they call us the arsonist

How can you question us when time and time again you show us that you will let us die.

Irony how a man who fought against gun violence died beneath a cop

Suffocated on the irony, when the cop proved to him that they could make any man disappear

That he would get his 15 minutes of fame from the grave.

They thought that we wouldn't fight for him

That we will take back the air they stole from him

We won't let him disappear.

We will not let this son, this brother, this human being fade away

Did you know one of the last things that George Floyd did was call at for his mother?

Mama, he cried as if maybe the woman that gave him life could save him or maybe he called out for her because he knew he was going to die

Like a child seeking out his mother on a dark night
Wanting comfort but only feeling the concrete floor
Mama, help me, I can't breathe, he's going kill me.

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