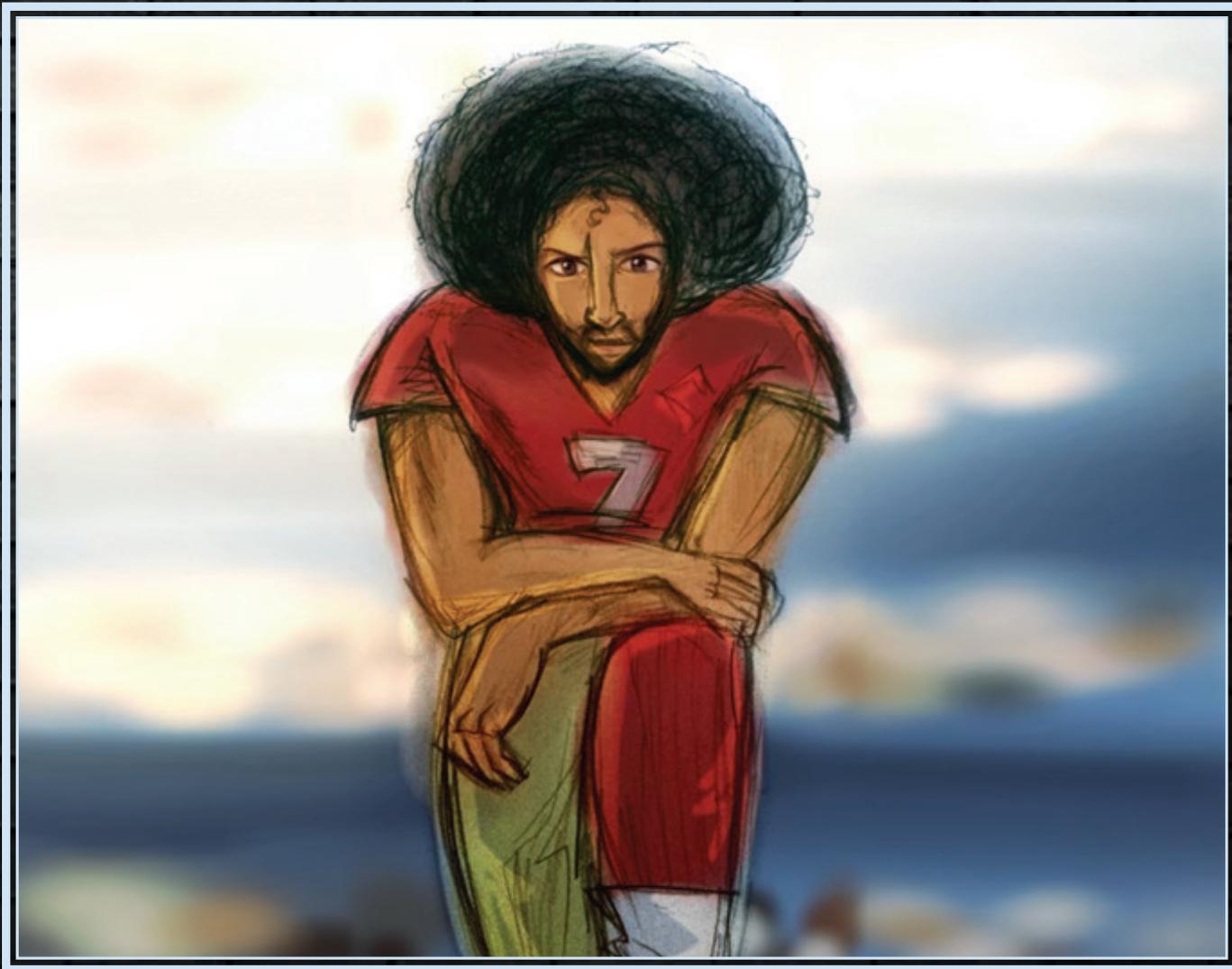


I MATTER

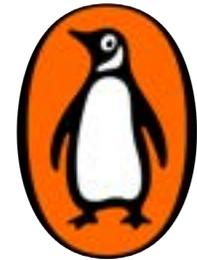
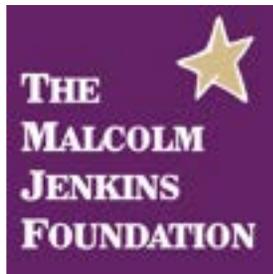


Project Coordinator: Isabella Hanson | Cover Art: Gabby Fields

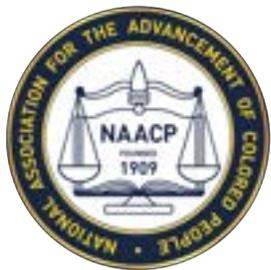
SPONSORS



National
Book 
Foundation



A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS



BORN THIS WAY/
FOUNDATION



ROCNATION

OPENAIR
FRAUENFELD



Brent Hub
COMMUNITY
ENTERPRISE CENTRE

THANK YOU TO THE “I MATTER” REVIEW PANEL

Carolyn Crawford
Danyale Davis
Enoch the Poet
Victoria Hanson
Sophia Hanson

Jamee Joppy
Jay the Poet
Vera Portier
Nimah Smith
Venus Snead



"I MATTER" JUDGES



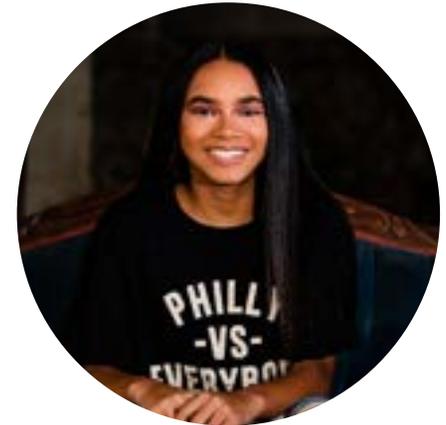
**ROBERT
CONVINGTON**
NBA



**MO'NE
DAVIS**
Little League Trailblazer



**MALCOLM
JENKINS**
NFL



**ISABELLA
HANSON**
I Matter, Founder

INTRODUCTION

On May 25, 2020, my life forever changed. When I stopped at the red light at 38th and Chicago in Minneapolis, I looked to my left and saw the police interacting with a young man named George Floyd. God made me stop and start paying attention. As I exited my car, I knew something bad was about to happen. I was the first witness on the scene. While they carried him to the police car, I tried to comfort him by talking to him. Soon other people came to try to help, but ultimately we were unsuccessful. I never could have guessed that this interaction would have resulted in this young man's death or that the tragedy would unite so many people to demand change in the world.

On April 21, 2022, I was visiting the George Floyd Memorial site when I had the opportunity to meet Isabella Hanson. She was dropping off copies of the "I Matter" book at the site and she presented me with a copy. I was moved by the poetry and artwork that students from around the world created in honor of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and so many others to support social justice. We continue to see violence increase in our communities, but I look to our youth with hope for a more united country and a more united world. To this year's participants and winners, I offer a heartfelt note of congratulations!

Charles McMillian
Key Witness from the George Floyd Trial



Charles McMillian and Isabella Hanson

George Floyd Memorial Site
Minneapolis, Minnesota



Awuku Darko Samuel
Ghana, West Africa

I AM THE BLACK MENNONITE

Isabella Hanson | Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania

I am the Black Mennonite Poet
The poet that rose from the ashes of the 2020
reckoning
Lineage traced to eight generations from the deep, dark
south
A place so deep no one dared to ask who, what or why

I am the older sister of a gymnast
There to support her as she kips, tucks, leaps and flik
flaks
As she moves, I watch ever so closely with a
parentalesque eye

I am the lover of all animals and the mother of two
sweet rescue cats
Simone, my longhaired cat, named in honor of the
musical prodigy Nina Simone
Ivy, my shy gray cat, who emerges each night for her
nuzzles and snuggles

I am grown, but I am grandmom's baby
The bond created the day that I arrived in Hershey,
Pennsylvania
A birth location that reflects my Mennonite roots and
my commitment to chocolate

I am the family stylist who is known for being a keen
shopper
An introductory-level seamstress
Who enjoys thrifting, mall shopping, online shopping,
even grocery shopping

Who am I you ask
I am a friend to all and the enemy of none
The quiet and focused listener being there for you in
your moment of need

I am a leader, a writer, a reader and an independent
thinker
I am the dope poet, the feminist poet, the sister poet
and the sista poet
I, am the Black Mennonite Poet

I AM

Mila Hollis | Chicago, Illinois

We were stalled
Delayed and held back
They cut the link
But never freed us from our chains

We matter because we choose to
We have to make the choice
Release ourselves from our mental
prisons
Allow our ancestors to rejoice
Make them proud
Not just whispering Black Lives Matter
But saying it loud
We matter because we're human

We matter because we're no longer
Our own set back
We are set on steps forward
Reprogramming our minds
While becoming programmers and Engineers
Healing our hearts
While becoming Heart Surgeons and Doctors

I matter because I became bigger
Than the box they put me in
I set the new standard
The standard decades in the making
I matter because I am





Maryam Ismayilova
London, England



Mikhi Drayton
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

BUTLER'S BLOOD

Jada Brown | Jacksonville, Florida

The blood of my child flowed down the
stairs of time
Before it was human
Before me
Closed
my child
Cultivated in the roots of my ancestry
Grew inside not me but my suffering
my child
Of history and pain
Forgotten and ignored

Grew
But time
Life
Was not what I birthed
Not what I gave
my child
Hope
A gift
A purpose
my child's name was hope
And I watched as man spilled its blood
All across the stairs of my time

OUR SKIN

Jayden Moore | Lexington, North Carolina

Our skin is never a liability,
It's enviable, one of most desirability
Our skin holds stories,
Ones of bravery, perseverance, and all the greatest glories
Our skin is unafraid,
Courage in the most alluring shade
Our skin is immutable,
Forever stuck this beautiful
This question is genuine,
How can you hate our skin?



Max Day
Washington, District of Columbia

I MATTER



Justice
4 HER



Julianne Park
San Ramon, California

MORNING ROUTINE

Therese Dang | Gaithersburg, MD

Each day as I rise my mind questions

Will I live to see another day or is it my time to go?

There was a time where I couldn't care less if I lived or died because I knew that when I died I would have birthed another little black girl with the same smile as mine. This lack of care was just an illusion. After 2012 I walked on the sidewalk anxious and scared with the only thought, no kid should be shot.

Holding a pack of skittles
Shot for existing
What am I missing?

Nine years later my morning routine is the same.

Wake up

Manifest and pray

I am black and beautiful, I am black and proud

Look up and hope they let us live another day

For the past two years I've tried to not let the isolation get to me, constantly wondering if I was born to be a target or if I'm just letting social media get to me.

Being a black woman in the United States scares me.

Every time I see the police I feel like I can't breathe.

I can't let the trauma posts numb me.
Tuesday they posted a black box and told me they cared for me

The next day it was deleted from their feeds

Getting out of bed has been hard for me as I watch my world crumble at my feet.

But my hope has not yet faced defeat as I rise the next day

I know I matter, that will never change

BLACK ROYALTY (REFINED)

Candice Garwood | Kingston, Jamaica

I call upon the terrestrial kingdom
to hail an imperial race-
an illustrious clan poised
with grandeur and grace.

Inhale the love
exhale the hate
acknowledge black royalty,
let's celebrate.

We are wrapped in the garb
of the skin that we're in,
the world is our kingdom
we'll forever reign within.

Our heads are shielded
by our crowns
of hair
majestic coils of thread
to be handled with care.

Our treasures are our talents
we are living fountains of art
the blueprint of civilizations;
our creativity has lived from the start.

We feast on the knowledge of
those before us
our success-our empires,
thrive as we maintain our focus.

Our conquests are our dreams
of which we have taken charge
Black Kings
Black Queens
we are royalty at large.

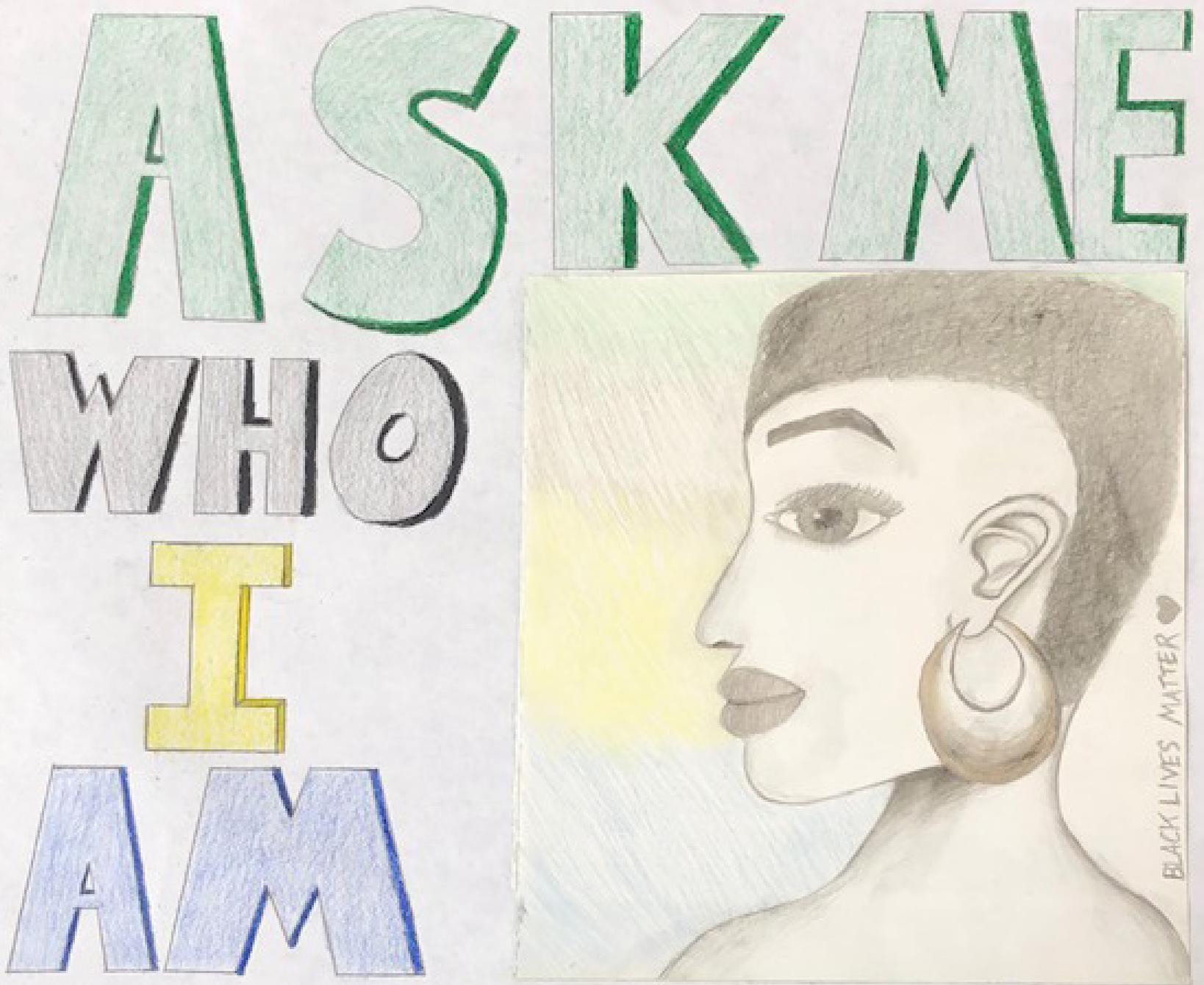
Our value is incalculable
our lives like golden scepters
should be protected by the kingdom
and preserved by ink and paper.

Take a look around at all that we create
inhale the love
exhale the hate
acknowledge black royalty,
let's celebrate.



Jima Chester

Jima Chester
Baltimore, Maryland



Ask Me
Rachelle K.
Springdale, Maryland

SHALA'S I AM POEM

Shala Barnett | Philadelphia, PA

I am capable and compassionate
I wonder if I will get out of Philly
I hear gunshots
I see jealous people look at you when you have
nice stuff on
I want to be able to play on my block

I am capable and compassionate
I pretend that I live in a nice neighborhood
I feel uncomfortable when I go outside
I touch my mom's heart
I worry if my family will stay safe
I cry for Lil Larry

I am capable and compassionate
I understand that my brother acts goofy inside
our house but acts hard outside the house
I say, "I am going to get out of Philly"
I dream about living where I can play with my
baby brothers
I try to keep my mom happy
I hope my family's dreams come true

I am capable and compassionate

THE STRENGTH IN CULTURE

Sarai Hoggard | Virginia Beach, Virginia

Even whilst we were turned down by society,
torn into pieces never re-attachable,
whipped by the words and actions of those
around us.

We stood strong.
In our words,
our beliefs,
and in each other.

The seeds planted by those before us allow us to
move forward.
To take a leap into the world, without worrying
about how others think of us.

Though we aren't where we used to be,
we still have quite a long way to go.

But thanks to the history running through our
veins,
the culture of our community will never struggle to
thrive.

Because we, the people, make Black history matter.



Max Day
Spokane, Washington

INSIDE

Adel Kabangu | American Canyon, CA

When I walk down the street, I know it could be my last day.
As I make my way to school, I know it could be my death.
Every time I go to bed, I recall the people I love.
Will I see them tomorrow? Will it be their last day?
When I gaze at my reflection, I see millions of others,
Those who have died before me, those who have made their mark,

Those who never deserved it, those who suffered unjustly.
But despite my worries, I refuse to live in fear; but instead, live in hope.
Hope that one day, people may no longer see me for what's on the outside.
Hope that people will see me for what's within.
For that's what truly matters.



A Justice Parade
Samiha Ahmad
Elmhurst, New York



Gabby Fields
Baltimore, Maryland

VOICES

Ima Essien | El Segundo, California

A knee to a neck
Is as damaging
As a gun to a temple

Death swallows us whole
As a bullet leaves a hole
We chant as we hold each other

Tell our children to be careful because our lives
lack value
In the eyes of the holder

A mic in a hand is the only way a voice is heard
Amplifying the crowd like a ball being thrown
That's when the eyes turn and ears listen

We chant I Matter
Because we believe it's true
We must
Our culture is the foundation of a country
Who doesn't love us

Our shattered bones
Scars that never heal
Matter

A world made up of matter
Spectacles in a delusion of our
imagination
Cant love each other

But we believe
Ancestors did
So we don't waiver
Harriet ran so we still do
Still chased by the misfortune of our
history
By the guns that create wounds
We run and chant

I MATTER
I MATTER
Because We DO.

WALK OUR STREETS FREELY

Terrinique Sands | Eleuthera, Bahamas

These tears always stay flowing down my cheeks,
Why do person's criticize me for my skin that they see?
Being told in a restaurant that this is not the right place
to eat, or using a different restroom unlike other humans
who don't like me.

Sometimes I wonder, should I change my complexion?
Hmmm, does it make sense to change what God made
a blessing? Will others really soon see the real me and
would I ever walk the streets?
Freely.

The times I tried to fight negativity over and over,
My world starts to sink and it feels like it's going to
turnover. I'll state a fact for others to see, that Black
Lives Matter and we already made history.
Independently.

We are protesting on sidewalks together as one.
Being chased by policemen with weapons that
would make us run. George Floyd and more lost
their innocent lives. I thought we were supposed
to be safe in our
countries, right?

Children of color want to play, however they
are treated in any type of way. They want to
play hopscotch with the others outside, but are
criticized after they don't have a color of Snow
White.
That's not right.

Why does Black Lives Matter? It is not just a
skin color , but it should never be a block in the
way of being kind and equal to one another. Let
us stop the racism in these beautiful streets,
then finally we can all live.
Freely



Samiya Nagrath
Delhi, India

EQUALS

Addi DeVal | Whitefish, Montana

Equals
In the world
We are all beautiful
We are all beautiful inside
And out

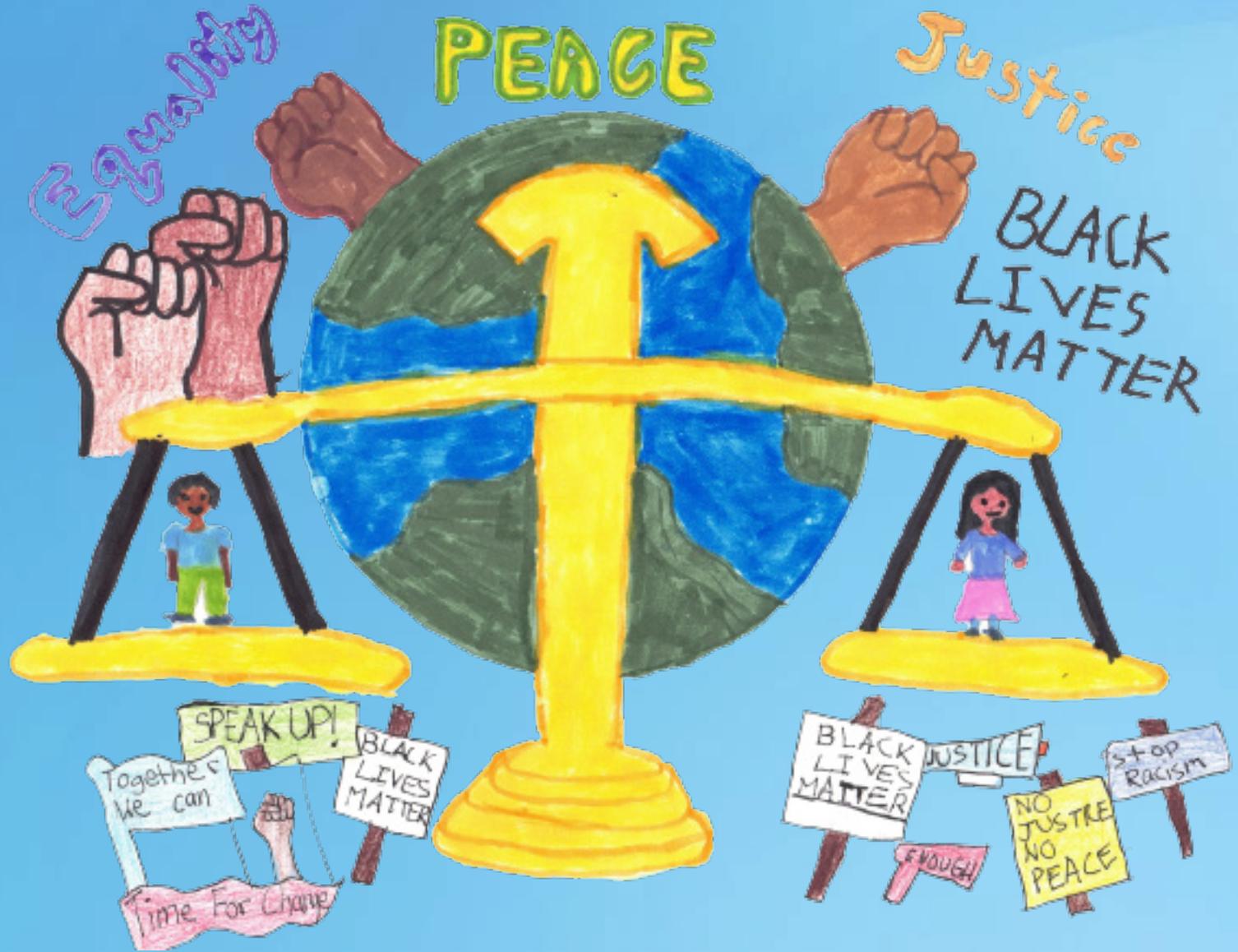
Right now
We need some love
Everybody needs love
We need unity and respect
Right here

We're here
Here together
I love everyone's life
In the world on the planet
We're now

Respect
We have power
But we need unity
Respect, we need respect in life
Value

Like you
Like everyone
Everybody on earth
Call people family, like they are
People

Equals



Ahdia Mohamed
Rocklin, California



Bianca Chiorescu
Botosani, Romania

THE MAGIC INSIDE

Noémie Munnings | Tampa, Florida

The Magic Inside

You can straighten my hair

You can call me mean names

You can take away my voice

You can put me in pain

Although I personally can't dance

You can take away my hips

You can try to remove

My beautiful lips

You can attempt to erase

The curve of my butt

You can try to take away

The pride in my strut

You can push you can pull

You can turn you can twist

But you just can't remove the magic in this

So why not embrace us

And shorten the list?