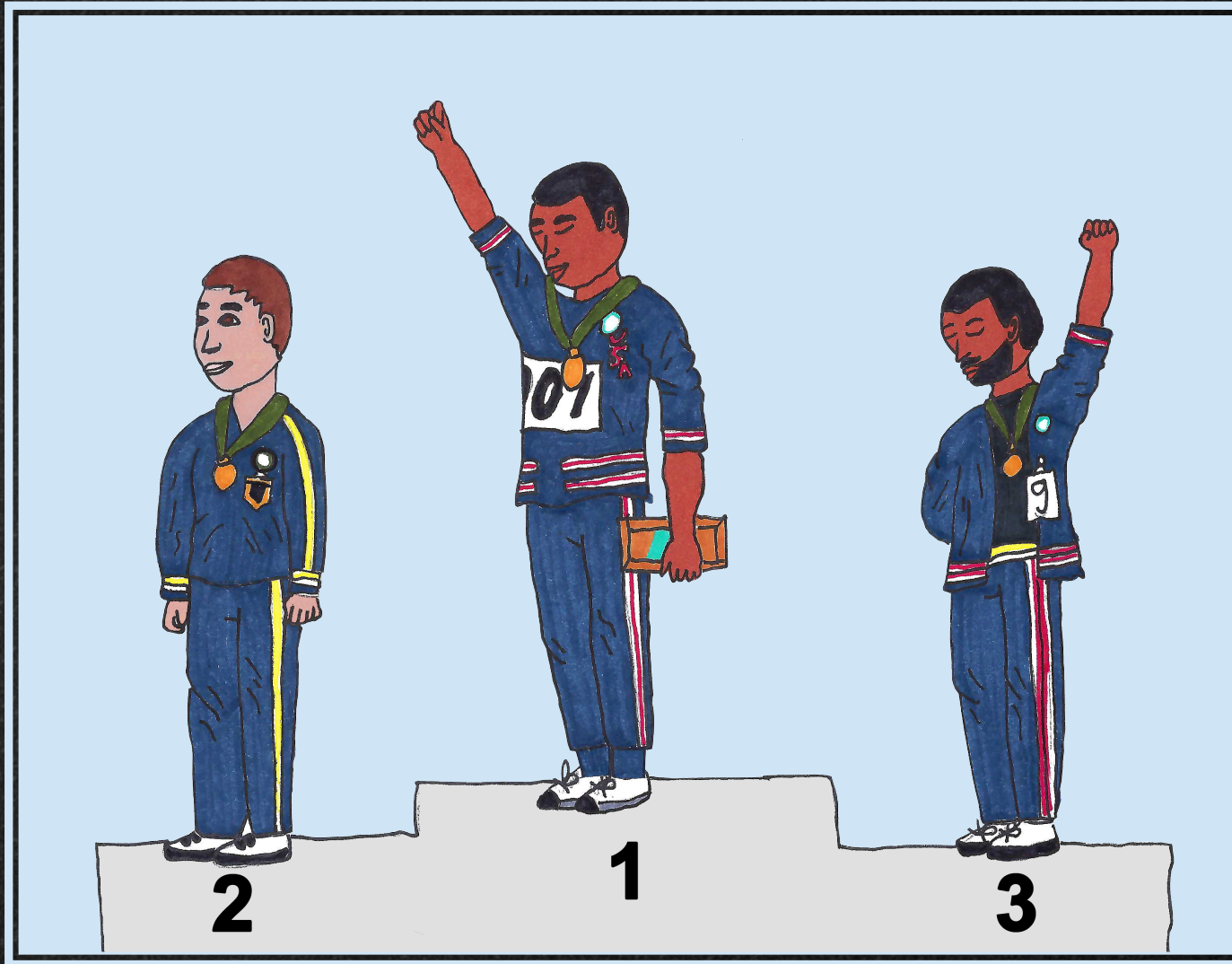


I MATTER



Project Coordinator: Isabella Hanson | Cover Art: Julissa Gama

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THANK YOU TO THE “I MATTER” REVIEW PANEL

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Jaylin Butler - Jay the Poet

Carlijn De Bruijn

Carolyn Crawford

Gabrielle Jones Fields

Victoria Hanson

Sophia Hanson

Jamee Joppy

India Robinson



“I MATTER” JUDGES



**ROBERT
CONVINGTON**
NBA



**MO'NE
DAVIS**
Little League Trailblazer



**MALCOLM
JENKINS**
NFL



**ISABELLA
HANSON**
I Matter, Founder

I Matter

Isabella Hanson
Chadds Ford, PA



We offer a special thanks to the family of Nipsey Hussle for allowing artwork created in his honor to appear in the "I Matter" book.

WE'RE THE EFFECT

Isabella Hanson

A great man named Nipsey Hussle once said,
"We're not the cause, we're the effect"
The cause is our discriminatory society
A society that grabs and whips us for seeking freedom
One that excludes us from the school books printed
to teach us
We have been redlined from housing equality and
economic prosperity
As we walk the red carpets at award shows,
Our people are redlined from categories, that we know,
they should have won
Society praises artists who imitate our Black creators
No matter where we turn, our voices and votes
are suppressed

Our effect is what we decide to do about it
We can use our platforms to stand up against racism
Even when it is inconvenient
We must use our power and leave platforms that
disrespect the diversity of our culture
We can use our hard-earned dollars to shop Telfar,
Fenty, and Aunt Jackie's Curls and Coils
So we create jobs in our communities
By taking solid action
And staying resilient
We become stronger and build unity
We become the effect.



Soul, Body Matters
Didon Heri
Portland, Maine

SOUL, BODY MATTERS

Maya Bolden | Alexandria, Virginia

I matter
Dusky, brown, black, me.
Corkscrew, curly, midnight hair
Dark, full of wonder, stars and love
Endlessly broad
Curls and curves
Dips and turns
Every last arch, it all matters
Fists held to the heavens
Black and brown
Black is me, black is you
A single breath we take
Step we make, hands we clench
Scream we cry
Feet we stomp
Crumble, shake the ground
The earth beneath our feet
Shake the world
A shout, a whisper, a story woven in
Tells of black tales, spread
Our lives, sing and sung

Knowledge, power
Sirens wailing, lives wrenched and stolen
Bandits of power stealing our lives
Black brown, mine yours
Red, white, and blue flashes your vision
Gas flooding your senses
Cars screech cries of pain sweat, blood, echo
Cuffing your hands
Caging your voice
Caging you in, your heart
Soul body
Matters it all matters
Afros, pom poms, braids, locks
Big brown eyes, big bones
Big voice
Should wonder, should dance,
Should be heard
Should matter
Does matter
I matter



ANTHEM

Alijah Walker | Norwalk, Connecticut

"Lift every voice and sing"
As George pleaded for his life
"Till earth and heaven ring"
As Tamir laid there struggling
To take his last breath
"Ring with the harmonies of liberty"
As Trayvon's killer walks free
"Let our rejoicing rise high as the listening skies"
As we harvest the strength from our ancestors
To shout "Black Lives Matter"
Yet we still aren't heard
"Let it resound loud as the rolling sea"
As we hear our hearts thud in our ears
When we see police lights in our rearview
I matter
As my people are innocently slaughtered
Taking bullet after bullet

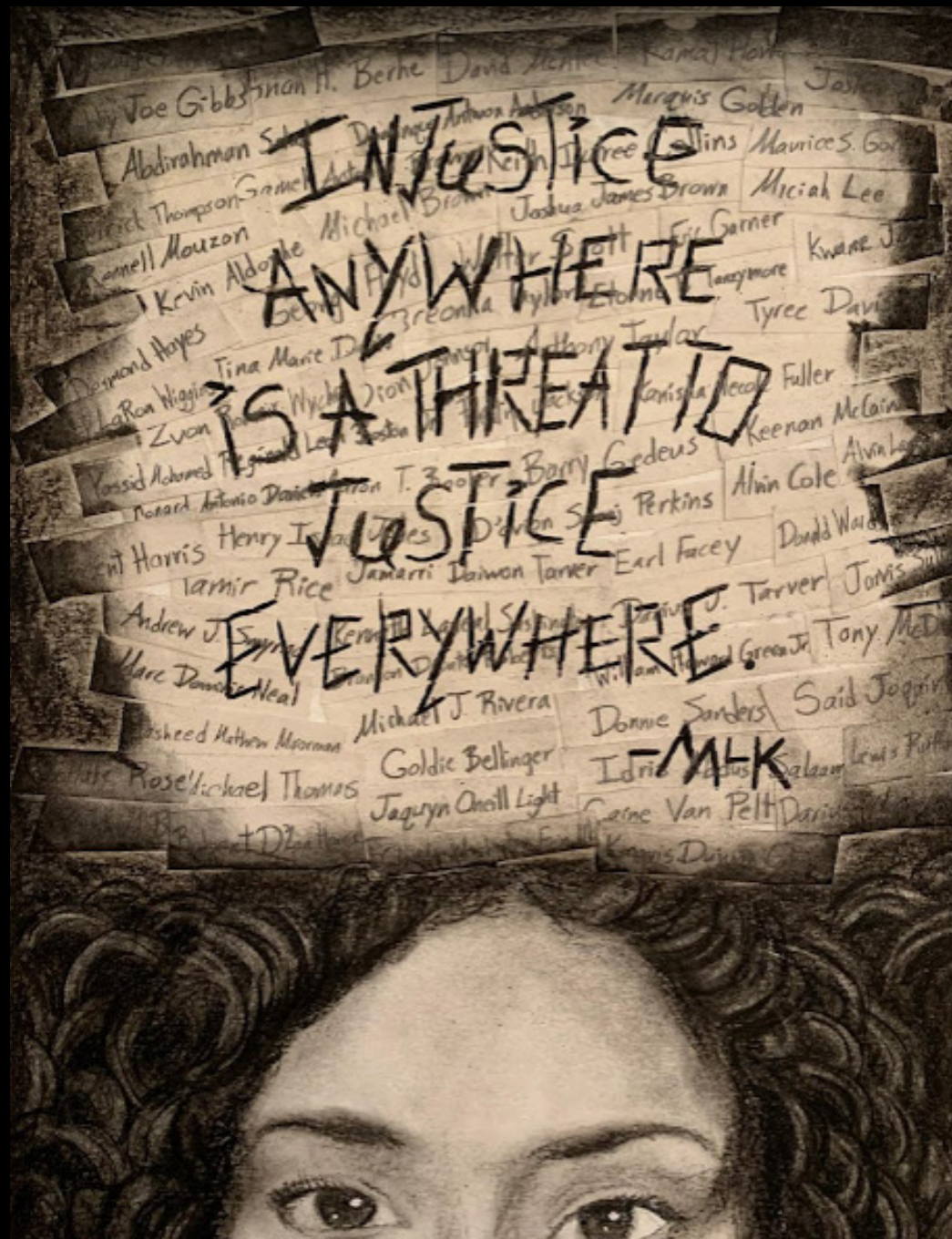
Again, again, and again
And the only weapon in sight being
My beautifully melanated skin that glistens
In the sunlight
I matter
We put our hands up to the God of our weary years
And our silent tears
As we scream and cry into the distance for help
But they watch
They watch as the glory of life disappears
From my watery eyes
As my name becomes a headline
I matter
As my soul goes
Gone with the wind of tomorrow
I matter



Showing great courage in the fight for equality - gold medalist Tommie Smith (center) and bronze medalist John Carlos (right) raised their fists on the podium after the 200 m race at the 1968 Summer Olympics.

Taking a Stand

Julissa Gama
Kennett Square, PA



Injustice
Sofia Vazquez
Newark, Delaware

“BLACK LIVES MATTER”

Rabi Michael-Crushshon | Minneapolis, Minnesota

“Black Lives Matter,” you say.
But you still sing *that* word,
touch our hair
and label us aggressive
when we try to defend
ourselves.

“Black girl magic,” you say.
Yet you fail to appreciate
the brown skin that coats our bodies
like cloaks
and the coily hair that winds around our heads
like a crown.

“This is a safe space,” you say.
But the space you are creating
is already contaminated
by the same people
it’s supposed to be safe
from.

“Black hair’s beautiful,” you say.
Yet somehow, it’s only beautiful on your skin
‘cause while we’re bullied and criticized
kicked out of classes and named unprofessional
for our hairstyles,
you don’t hesitate to take them for yourselves.
Box braiding and cornrowing
your own hair.

You can say black lives matter,
But your reposting and quoting
don’t mean nothin’
‘til
you show those
black lives
that they matter
to you

We fear our lives when in sight
of the ones who are supposed to
protect and serve.

Systems so old,
that they are beginning to rot
are still being used
to oppress
us.

Black bodies are filling the streets
and despite how hard you try
to wash away our pain
your hands, the roads, the flag
are still stained in our
blood.

Our voices are hoarse
but we scream out,
trying to prove to you
we matter,
that the melanin in our skin
doesn’t affect the fact we are
only
human

“I can’t breathe” we say.
“We matter” we say.
“Say their names” we say.
“Don’t shoot” we say.
“We’re hurting”
we say.
But still,
black lives only matter
because it’s trending

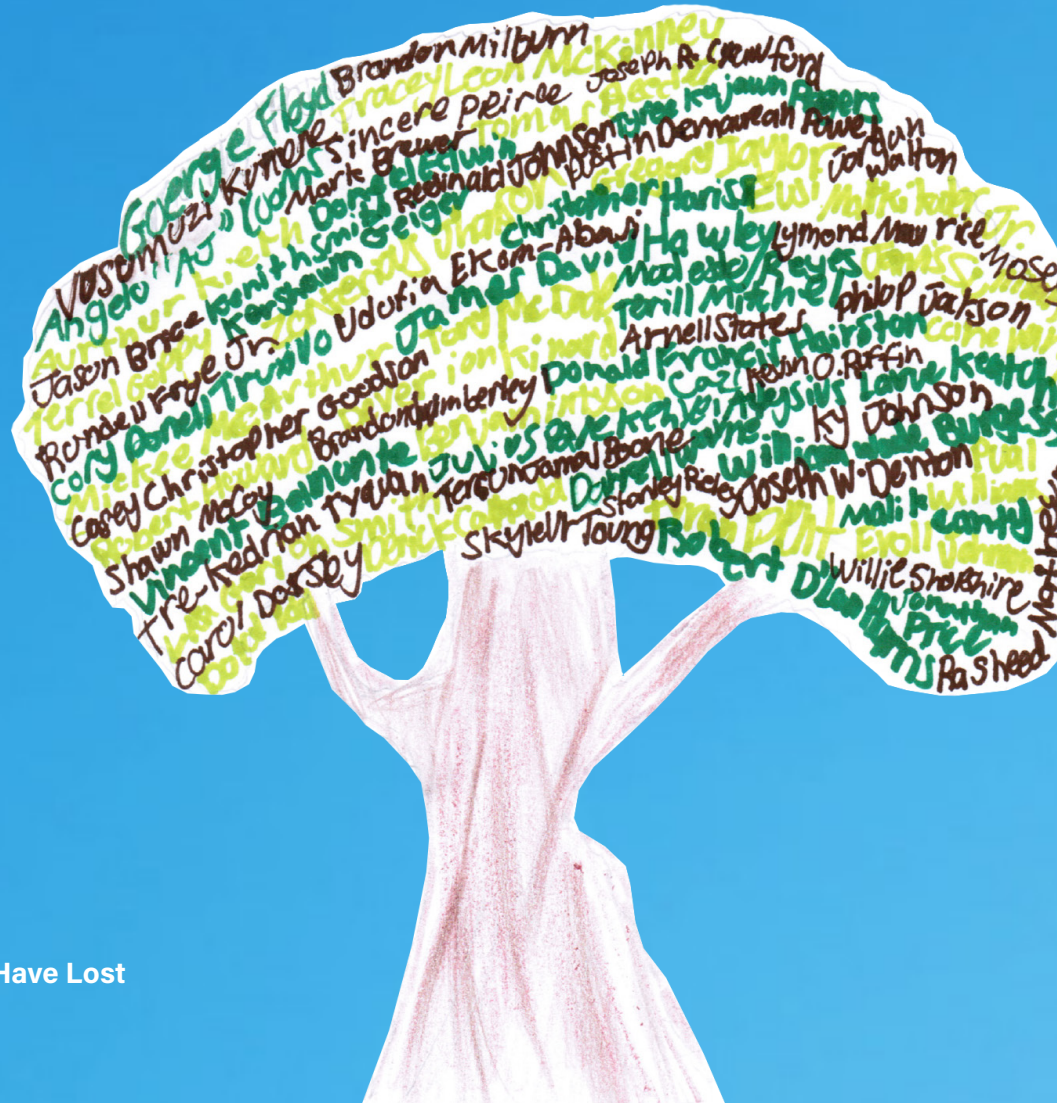
BLM

Alexis Aryeequaye | Apple Valley, Minnesota

When did I matter?
When did Black Lives Matter?
We mattered when George Floyd and Eric Garner
were suffocated
We mattered when Philando Castile was
slaughtered by an officer in his car, while his 4 year
old daughter witnessed it
We mattered when Breonna Taylor was shot in her
own home
We matter when we are dead beyond the grave,
but not when we are still walking on this Earth
We mattered when some people walked around
with "black lives matter" tee shirts without knowing
the people, the lives behind the phrase
We mattered when a hashtag trended on Twitter
for a week
We mattered when an influencer protested for a
picture and not the cause
We mattered when we were a black square on your

Instagram feed
The conversation on racism should not have
an expiration date
We are a movement, not a moment
We are not a trend
We are a nation divided by color
When we should be united by the innocent
people who died at the hands of the people
who are chosen to protect us
We are a movement much bigger than
ourselves
Say their names
Not for the praise
Not for the followers
But because they aren't here to say it
themselves.

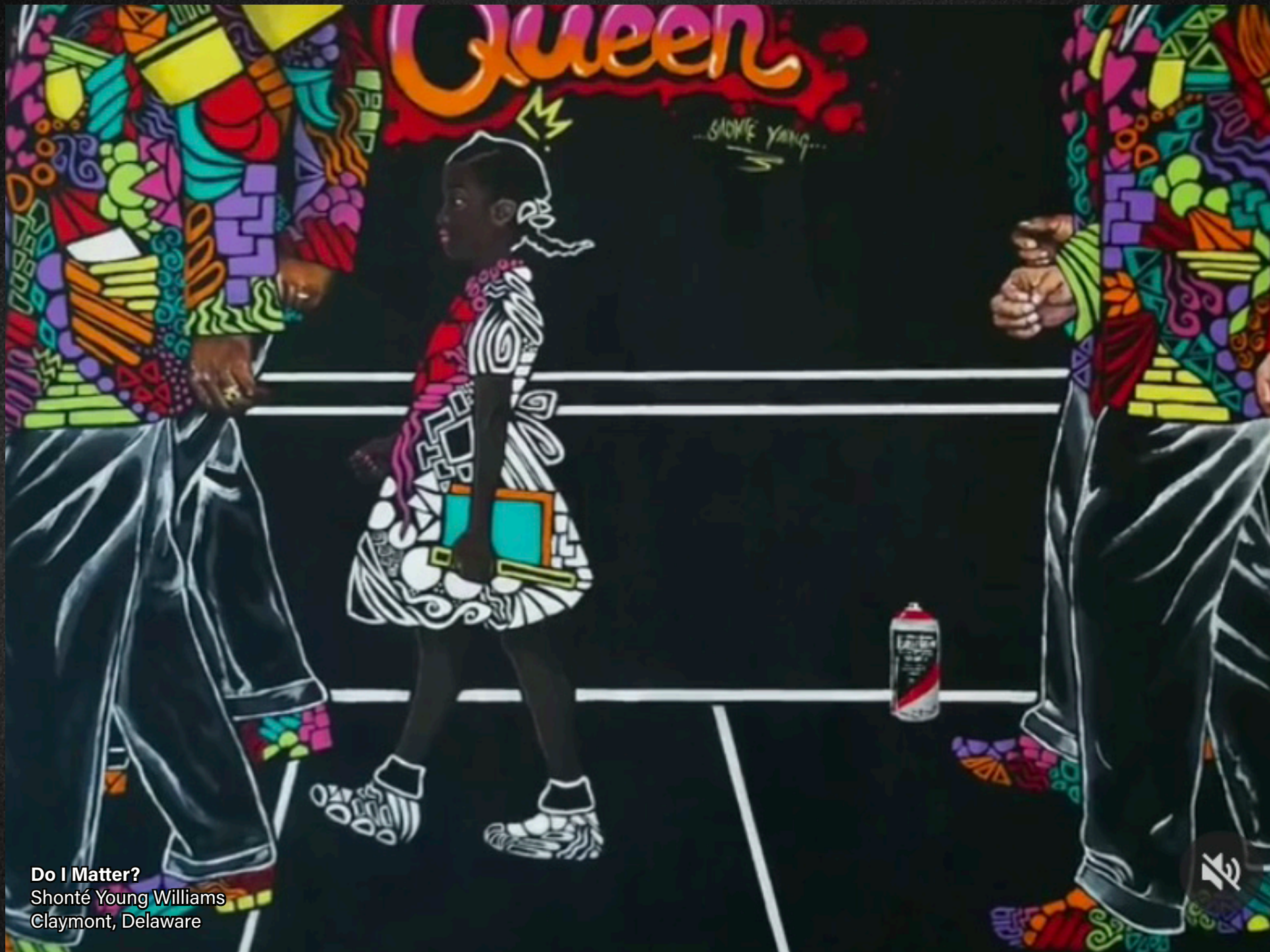
BLACK LIVES MATTER



Remember Those Who We Have Lost

Galia Wachman

Boston, Massachusetts



Do I Matter?
Shonté Young Williams
Claymont, Delaware

DO I MATTER?

Vernice Roman Woodland | Washington, D.C.

Do I Matter?
Well, we act like you don't matter.
Do I have a voice?
Well, you've been silenced.
Do I have a life?
Well, we keep killing you.
Do I look pretty?
Well, we have beauty standards.
Do I have a vote?
Well, we keep you from going to the polls.
Am I smart?
Well, we don't give majority Black schools
enough funding.

The system was never broken,
IT WAS BUILT THIS WAY.
To make us think we are not worthy of
respect,

Love,
Education,
Protection,
Safety,
And the list goes on.

You do matter.
You do have a voice
You do have a life.
Your melanin is beautiful.
You do have a vote.
You are smart.
WE MATTER.
BLACK LIVES MATTER.

The End of the poem,
Not the end of oppression.

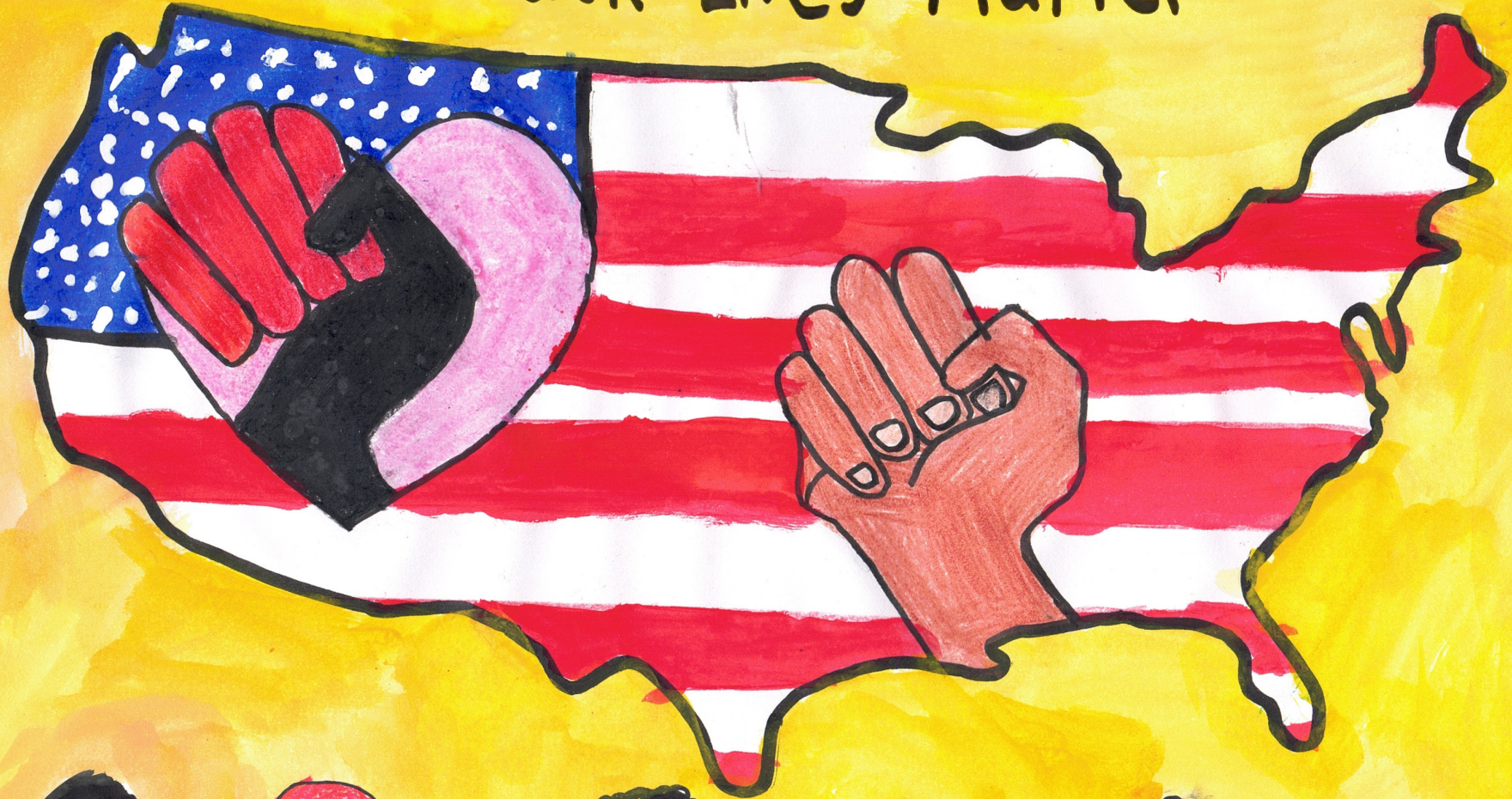
DOES SHE KNOW

Lyra Ericson | Cambridge, Massachusetts

Mother of Exiles is watching above
She lit the path you walk with her now rusting torch
Does she know what you've done with her promise
of freedom?
She asked for the masses that needed to breathe
To give them air, to set them free
Does she know, how you killed him with your knee?
Does she know how this country, made for
everyone to be welcomed
Discriminates on the basis of background
On the basis of race?
I imagine the look on her face
When she sees what you've done to her American
Dream?
How you've turned it into a nightmare?

How nothing is as it seems?
When her lamp gets too heavy and she must set it
down
Will she be shocked, when she looks around?
Her Golden Gate, stained with blood
Of her dark-skinned children
How her wishes have fallen on deaf ears
How the racists have thrived for all these years?
When she can no longer glow worldwide welcome,
Does she know this country is now hell-come?

Black Lives Matter



Black Lives Matter
Ada Nazneen
Rocklin, California



Black Prince
Affen Oluwasegun
Lagos, Nigeria

HERE I AM

Chelsea Clarke | Bloomfield, New Jersey

Here I am.
Don't block
me from the noise.
I am power.
Strength.
Don't hide me
from the noise.
I deserve,
we deserve
a voice,
a chance
to speak,
to be apart
of.

I am,
we are
the next generation.
Little black boys
and girls.
Gather and listen.
We will fight
for love.
We will fight
with love.
Because
Here I am
Here you are.
Don't hide us
from the noise.
I deserve,
we deserve
a voice

a chance
to speak,
to be apart
of.

Know their names.
Daunte Wright.
Rayshard Brooks.
Daniel Prude.
George Floyd.
Here they were.
All black people.
All unfairly killed.

Breonna Taylor.
Atatianna Jefferson.
Aura Rosser.
Emmett Till.
Here they were.
All black people.
All unfairly killed.

You can't
take me--
you can't
take us
away.
Because
here we are.
As high as the mountains
and as strong as the wind.
Do not forget us,
the next generation.

I'M 13

Zee Cooper | Hampton, Virginia

What do people think when they see me?
A black kid, a thug, a murder, a rapist, a drug
dealer.
They assume my father left me and I live in the
projects,
That I listen to trap music,
That I eat fried chicken and watermelon like it's
my first meal in weeks.

They clutch their purses and stare,
I'm a danger to society.
I'm aggressive, I'm angry.
I can't control it.
How am I a black 13 year old

Threatening?
How am I the kid who grew up in the suburbs
threatening?
How am I the kid with 3 loving parents
threatening?
How am I threatening?
In reality

I'm scared.
Scared of what people think of me.
Scared of what the cops see me as,
Do they see a kid or a criminal?
I'm scared for my life everyday because if I don't
get down quick enough that's the end.



The Outsider
Mikel Elam
Philadelphia, PA

The Queen of Kings
Willy Karekezi
Kigali, Rwanda



I MATTER

Johnetta Sneed | Philadelphia, PA

I matter.

The melanin that lays upon my skin tells me I matter.

The activists tell me I matter.

The slaves on the Plantation tell me I matter.

My brothers and sisters whose blood runs through these very streets tell me I matter.

We stand on one knee and lift that fist in the air to let the kids at home know that they matter.

Our melanin is not a weapon but a gift that every little black boy or black girl should love.

You matter, I matter, we matter.

The protesters that have died fighting for me, matter.

The activists that lost their lives because they believed in change, matter.

Every black person that walks this very earth, matters.

We are not saying any non-black person doesn't matter.

We are saying that we are making change, we are starting anew.

I matter, my black mother that has to have food stamps to feed us tells me I matter.

My father that works from six am to three pm tells me I matter.

When I scream black lives matter I need you not to just hear me.

I need you to feel me, hear that rage in my voice. Look at me as the anger inside of me builds up.

Once you feel that rage, that need of change. Then you'll know why I matter.

Why all of my black brothers and sisters matter.

Why Black Lives Matter.

IT'S NOT JUST THEM

Jenee Brown | Zachary, Louisiana

It's not just police,
There are more people killing us than you think.
Our doctors feed us pills
And ignore the pain we feel.
Black women cry for epidurals
Black men scream for EKG's
"It's not a heart attack,
You're overreacting sir."
"You're only a few centimeters dilated,
Medicine is not required."
Our cries ring silent among the people there to heal us.

It's not just doctors,
There are more people killing us than you think.
Judges lock us up, our brothers and sisters,
For years and years on petty crimes until we can be free
We're on probation for years to come
Officers breathe down our necks.
Is that a bottle in the car?
Do you have drugs in here?
Why were you speeding?
Any tiny mistake leads to violation.
Back in jail, no right to vote
No right to freedom from slavery.
Each prison overpopulated and underfunded.
No AC in the summer, no heat in the winter.
Gas leaks in the cell block and prisoners suffocate
behind locked doors.
Our cries ring silent among the people there solely to
punish us.

It's not just judges
There are more people killing us than you think.
His teacher gave up on teaching him to read
In the 7th grade with a 2nd grade reading level.
He falls through the cracks, hoping football and
basketball scoop him up.
If not, drugs and gangs will take him anyway.
He'll have money to pay for his shoes, his food,
his clothes, his mom's bills.
And no one does a thing his senior year
His ACT score is 14 and he doesn't know about
the SAT's
No college can sponsor an athlete that doesn't
know a thing.
That teacher gave up and his life fell away at
that moment.
Jail or sports?
Where will he end up?
His cries ring silent among the people there to
educate him.

It's not just teachers.
It's not just judges.
It's not just police.
It's the systems put in place to keep us from
rising up.
Our culture runs through America, pushing it
further everyday.
We are the life, the inspiration, the support, and
the happiness.



It's Not Just Them
Shonté Young Williams
Claymont, Delaware

THERE'S A NAME BEHIND

Gelone Ivan Ofilada | La Union, Philippines

In the midst of the unknown I'm the voice of power to
amplify the truth
Be the epitome of diversity and words of kindness,
uphold!
Live not in fear, live freely to South to North
Stare not in appearance, not in color, race and cloth.

Not this kind of freedom is what they are longing
Verity, it's the world cheapest remedy
It is there on my epitaph where beauty are standing.
Cast not the verdict on mine, my color speaks for who
I am

Strength and integrity to the shoes that stand for
protest
Burn the standards, cut the roots of bigot
Sequester not the race, heal the wounds and wipe the
tears of oppressed

In modernity, love is the language not prejudice
and loathe.

No poet, even blind can say that you don't fit
and matter
And it is mirrored in your eyes, the despair
Oh! Beautiful and worthy you are
To your surrounding, incomparable by far

A time to celebrate every chance to make
changes
Turn the hatred to wealth of vigor, light up the
flames of puissance
Nothing to fear, nothing to be ashamed of.
So know ourselves, Oh! at last we matter and
we breathe.



Borders
Vamika Bangarukathi
Dallas, Texas

The I Matter poetry and art competition is a youth-founded and youth-led international initiative to uplift diverse voices in the movement for social justice.

