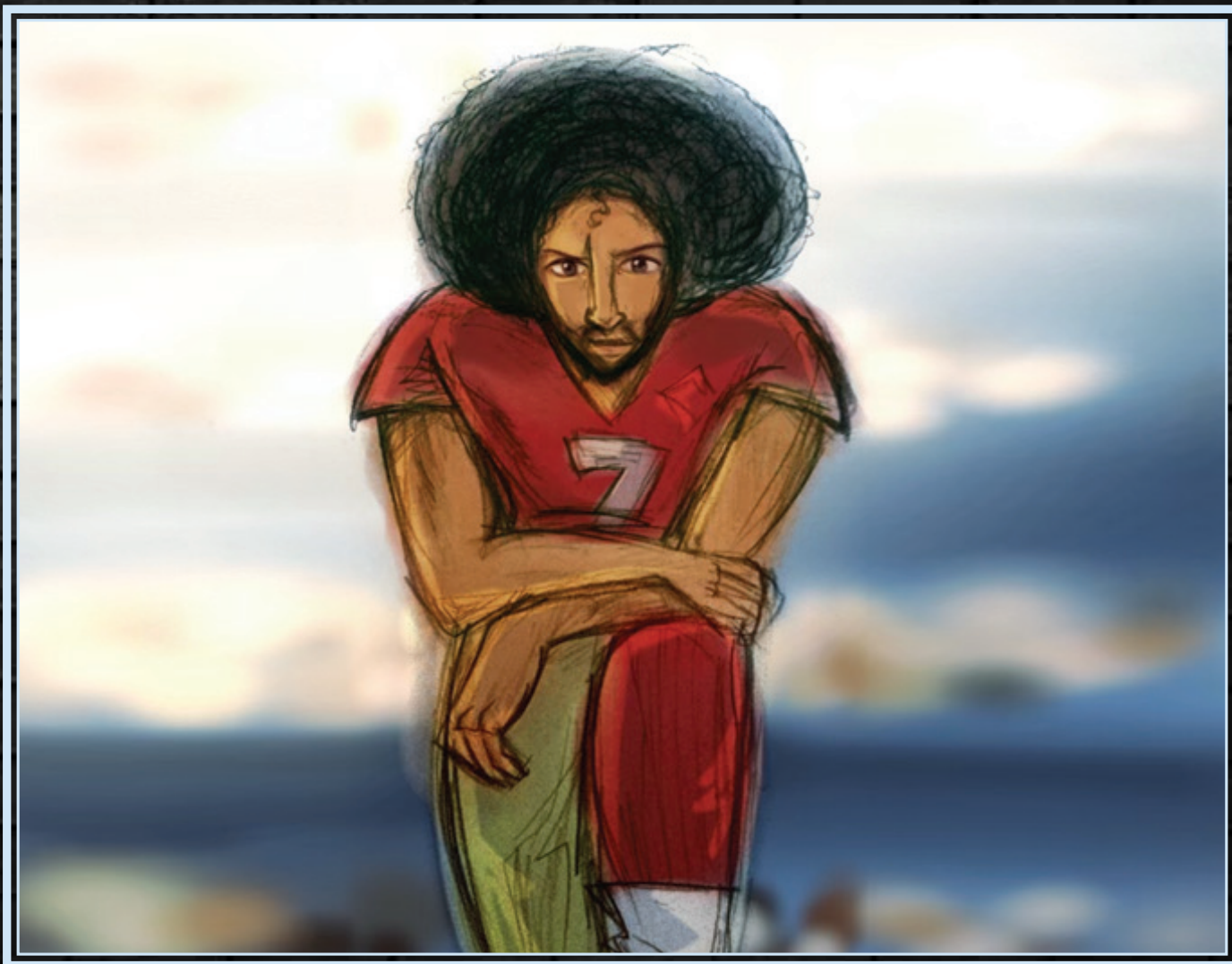



# I MATTER



Project Coordinator: Isabella Hanson | Cover Art: Gabby Fields

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# 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**



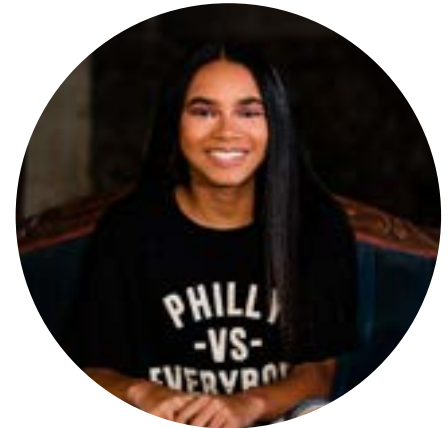
**ROBERT  
CONVINGTON**  
NBA



**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 grandma'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.

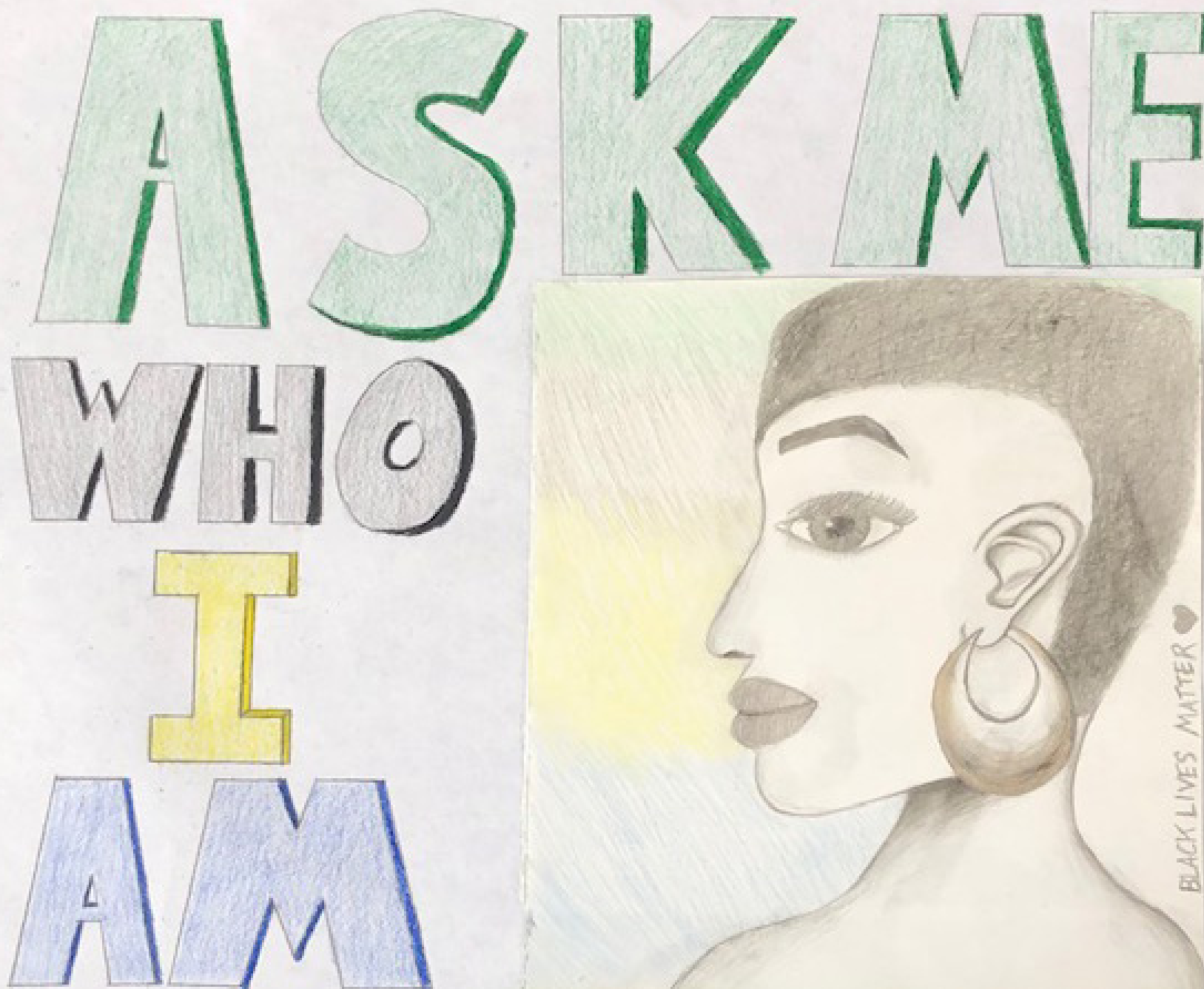
Our value is incalculable  
our lives like golden scepters  
should be protected by the kingdom  
and preserved by ink and paper.

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





**Jima Chester**  
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.

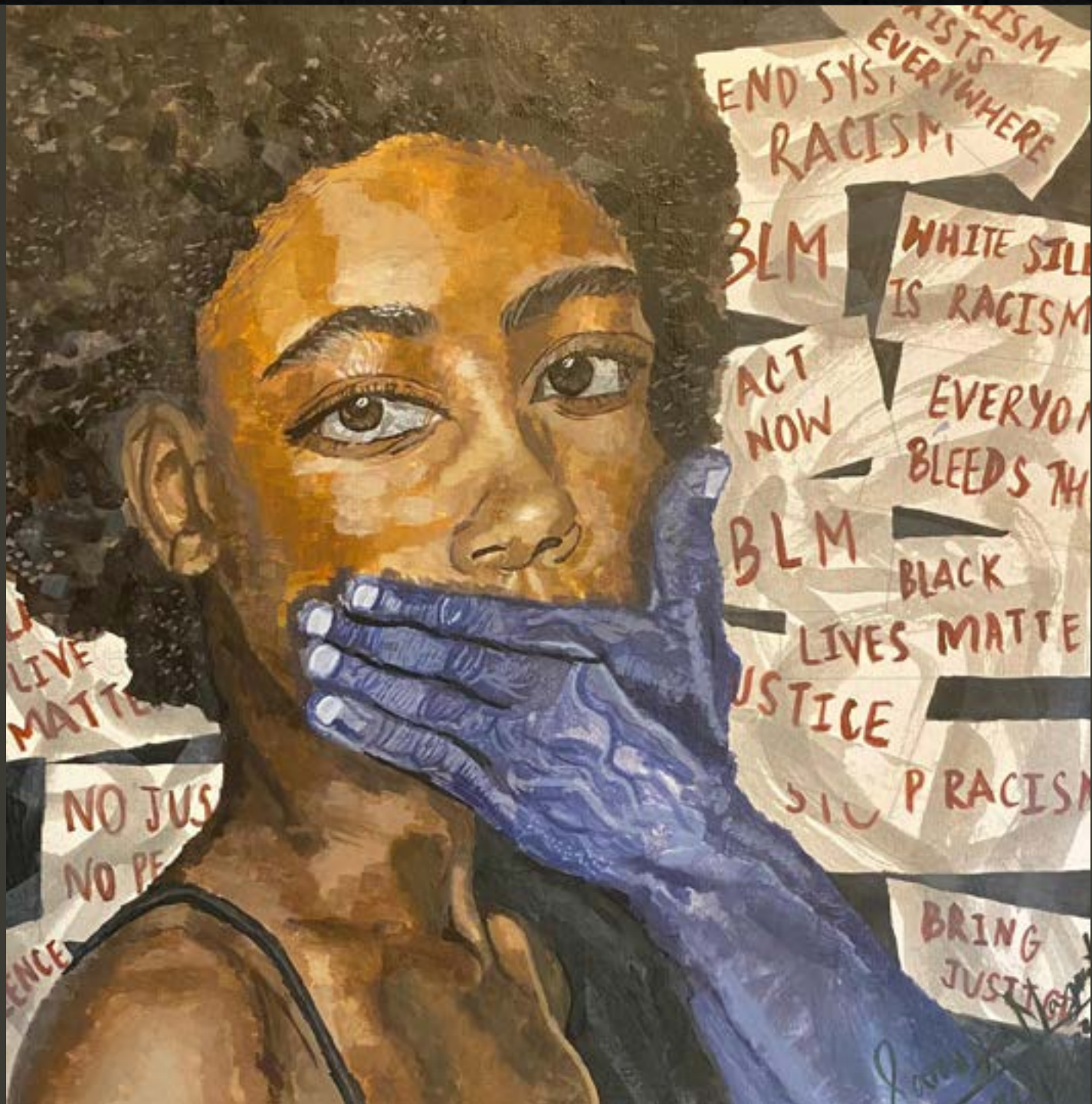
Sometimes I wonder, should I change my complexion?  
Hmmm, does it make sense to change what God made  
a blessing? Will others really soon see the real me and  
would I ever walk the streets?  
Freely.

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 DeVall | 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?