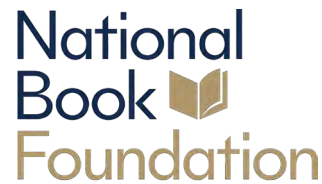


I MATTER



Project Coordinator: Isabella Hanson | Cover Art: Ada Nazneen

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**ISABELLA
HANSON**
I Matter, Founder

INTRODUCTION

In these challenging times, I am encouraged by our young people who are dedicated to creating a better future. I know from personal experience that standing up for what you believe in is not easy. It requires courage and commitment and will be met with resistance. When we are faced with challenges, it is important to stand by our convictions and continue to express ourselves. The young people showcased in this book exemplify this spirit and commitment to positive expression. Their poetry and art are an inspiration to us all.





Representative Justin J. Pearson
Memphis, Tennessee



I Matter and You Can't Change My Mind
Ada Nazneen
Rocklin, California

YOU CAN'T CHANGE MY MIND

Isabella Hanson | Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania

I want you to know that our AI - Allen Iverson was
The Answer
Long before the term AI began trending online
Trending with questions about AI bias
When the bias is from the writers who developed
the code
To the companies developing artificial "intelligence"
Develop algorithms and data sets that value Black life

Record companies have been egregiously exploiting
our cultural contributors for decades
Millions and millions sold while entertainers have
unpaid royalties
We need our legislators to send a message that our
art matters
Pass legislation to protect our talented artists
Create laws that require fair compensation for our
intellectual property

Affirmative Action was created in 1965 to provide us
with opportunities

Opportunities not offered from 1610 to 1860 during
slavery

Opportunities not offered during "legal" segregation
We have been stolen, beaten, shackled, segregated,
and Jim-Crowed

To the United States Supreme Court Justices who voted
to end Affirmative Action

I am saying to you that We Matter and You Can't
Change My Mind

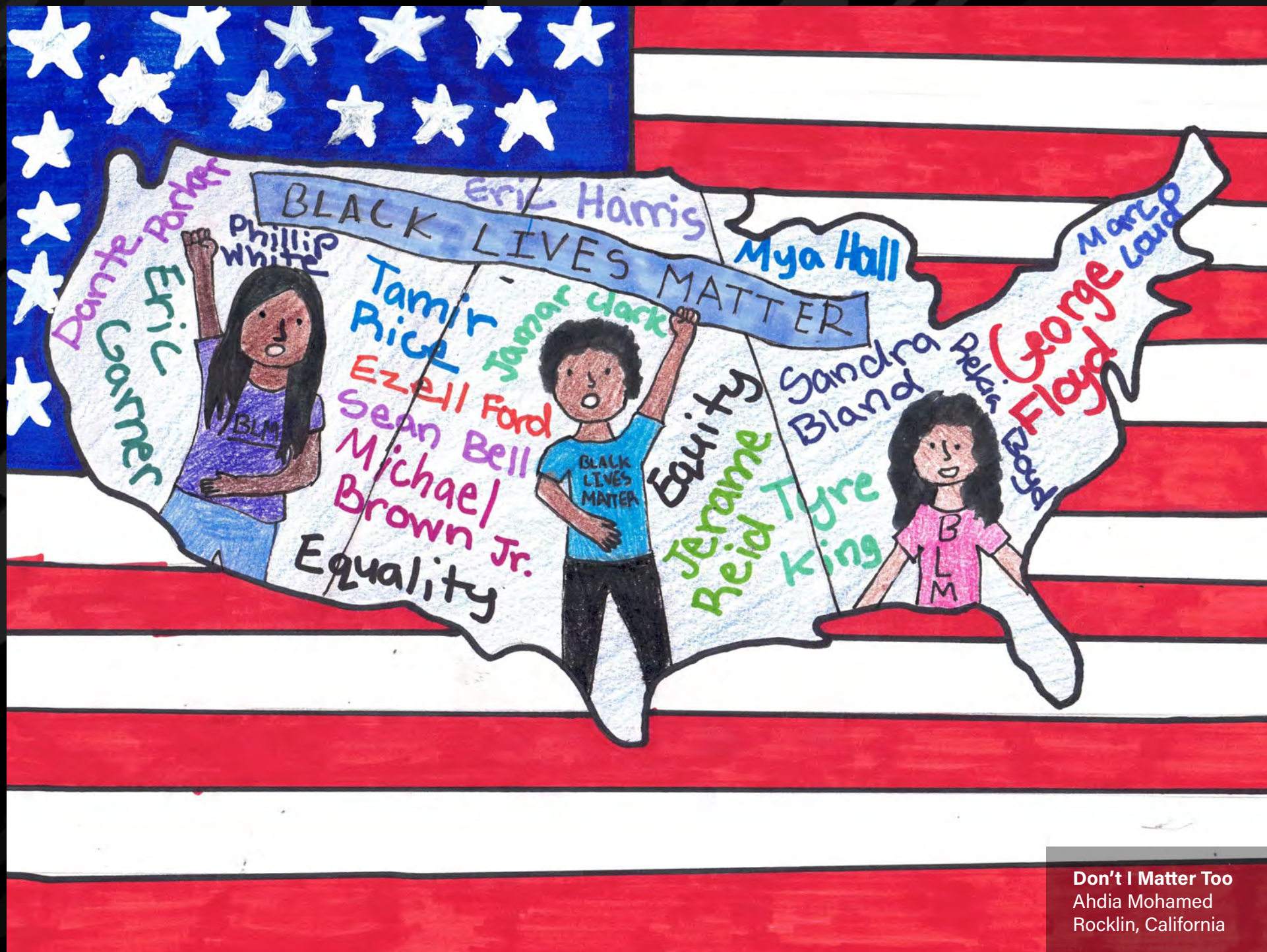
THE FLAG SPEAKS

Sophia Hall | Washington, D.C.

I am red white and bruised blue from the beating
of batons against Black bodies. I am starred
with bullet holes, spangled with broken glass
and tear gas, white milk and white tears
forming rivers, flowing from city streets
into sewers. Betsy Ross embroidered me
with the fear that you call freedom,
my stripes like fields of farmland, Emmet tilled
that soil with his own blood, red pin-pricked
on cotton that is picked, plucked, then woven
into cloth that forms me, flimsy
unless puppeteered by politicians,
flow in a sky shrouded in smoke.
My white lines like the string wrapped
around wrists and wringed around necks.
I bear witness to that lynching, that school shooting,
that border crossing turned burial--
but I bear no responsibility.
I wave welcomes to tourists and wave away weary
travelers just as easily, I wave good riddance with glee.
Though I have no voice, many speak for me,
through me, use me to put more profit in their pockets.
Fight over me, fight wars for me, kneel protests
on sore knees, forge crowns of grabbed glory.

I am just another form of currency.
They praise me, promising false liberty,
so much for land of the free, oh say can't you see
me plastered on stolen indigenous land
like an eviction notice.
There is no end to what can be colonized,
even on the pock-marked moon I fly.
I am the armor wrapped around soldiers shoulders,
I am the sign that sparks surrender.
America, you hold me like a lover,
yet wield me like a weapon.
I am the anthem, the sound of shots fired, the ghosts
of the Bison stampede, glass breaking,
and here I emerge, above rockets and ruckus
and riots, my gleaming whiteness my innocence,
the night my background, the stars of Black lives
outshining any light that I provide.





Don't I Matter Too
Ahdia Mohamed
Rocklin, California



Self Rising
Karima Sorel
Paris, France

SCARS

Bahtsiyah Baidi | Los Angeles, California

I never knew a scar would put me in
danger
That everyday when I open my eyes
It might be my last
Why ?
I ask . I plead. I cry.
Eyes I feel following me , peering into my
soul
Over my shoulder a deep gaze
When I just came to get a drink from the
store
And when I see them red and blue lights
Beaming in the sky I fear in my heart
that they just might
Mistake me as the criminal
Mistake my pleads as aggression
Mistake a phone as a gun
Mistake my tears as poison
Believe that I should be gone
And I better not utter a sound , a peep

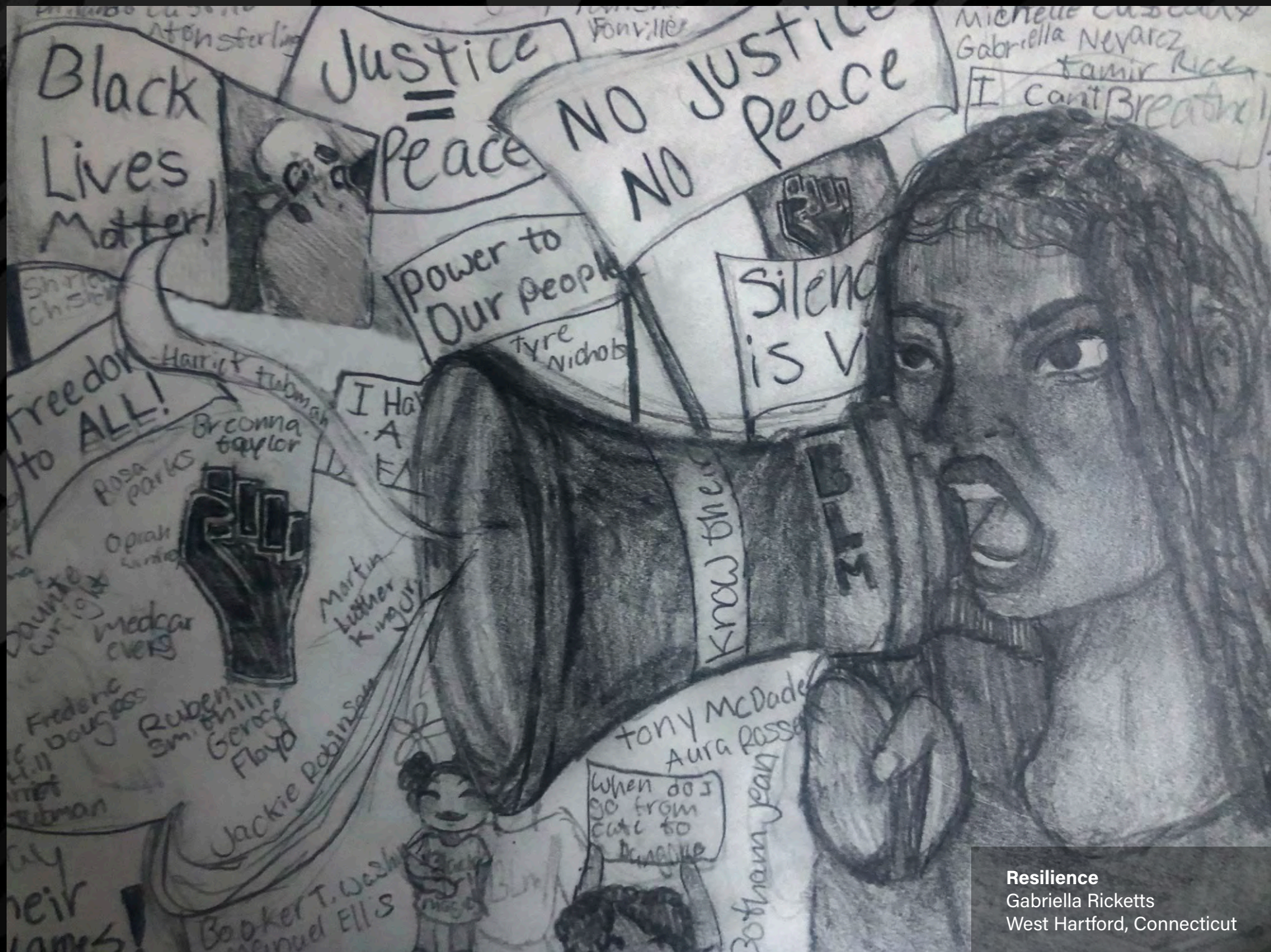
better not creep out of my mouth
Cuz then he might use that shiny silver
weapon of his to taunt me
To hush me
To eventually end me
It's become a cycle that needs to be
stopped
Everybody against each other
Bumping heads , pounding fists ,
ending life's
When we all need to be united
As one
I will not stop until I am heard
I will cry and scream and shout
As loud as I can
Until the devils ears pry open
To finally comprehend
That these scars are not real
It's only my skin
My beautiful skin

CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?

Laila Davis | Washington, D.C.

One fist raise.
One short phrase.
And now Black lives matter
From movement to media alone.
From topic to trending on twitter.
What happened to the shirts, flags, and profile
pictures?
Is the craze over already?
Is this all there is to me?
The latest fad, or fixation
Can you hear me now?
I am not a trend.
You're an activist if you raise your fist.
I raised my fist, which became grounds for a gun to
my head.
My cause is not inspired by a hashtag or a 30-second
video about how racism is wrong.
We know this, we preach it, but you continue to
ignore us

Fighting tenaciously and tirelessly for liberty and
equality, we have been here.
Black lives matter because we are here every day,
dying every minute for the right you have by default.
We had to make sacrifices in order to be heard.
Can you hear me now?
Your ears alone are not enough to hear us because we
still remain unheard.
Listen with your hearts.
You cannot silence me because I am not mute.
Scream, sing, whisper.
HEAR US
If you refuse to acknowledge them, acknowledge me,
you cannot possibly walk a mile in my shoes.
Hoarse voices cry, tears stream down my cheeks, and
blood splatters on my scraped knees as I beg
Beg you for my life, my family, and my freedom.
Can you hear me now?



Resilience
Gabriella Ricketts
West Hartford, Connecticut



We're Heros
Nalani Woods
Kansas City, Kansas

WE MATTER

Imani Barnes | Clinton, Maryland

Black Lives Matter
Everyday the lives of "us"
End faster and faster.
Innocent blood on the streets
The world red like a beet
Around the corner there is death
Losing all strength
Till the victim takes their last breath

Police say
"They were violent in display"
"They moved when I said stay."
"They reached a certain way."
"So I shot."
"I shot him eighteen times."
"I followed all the signs."
But yet an innocent black, man
Lays dead, no surprise

Black Lives Matter
Cause in fact
Michelle Cusseaux changed a lock
Tamir Rice played in a park
Breonna Taylor slept in her bed
But yet they all died
Dead
By a police officer's hand

Black Lives Matter
So I join the protests
And line up with the rest I raise up my fist
The pungent smell of gas, I resist
Taking a chance of being beaten
Arrested, weak, and eaten
But I will still get up and stand strong
And walk along
Singing what became like a song "Black
Lives Matter"

LITTLE FINGERS

Sharae Burris | North Haven, Connecticut

Little fingers poke and prod.
Why can't you leave me be?

Unwanted hands find themselves in my hair-
they fancy me an animal at a petting zoo.
Is it not enough that the blood of my ances-
tors enriches the soil
on which your country was built?
Must you further dehumanize us?
Little fingers, why can't you leave me be?

Squinted eyes look at me suspiciously-
as if to block my image from offending them.
Do you really hate the thought of having a
conversation with me?
What have I done to you?
Little fingers, why can't you leave me be?

A baby, crying at the sight of me-
yet welcoming every other fairer-skinned
person.
But yes, it was my hair that scared it.
It was much too big and much too wild-
how did I not see it sooner?
Little fingers, why can't you leave me be?

A face is scrunched up in laughter-
Apparently, my braids were funny.
The same braids that helped my ances-
tors navigate escape routes,
the same braids that smuggled rice grain
to nourish them and their families.
In these braids and intricate patterns
there is life-
there are remnants of freedom.
But yes, take that as well.
Little fingers, why can't you leave me be?

Bodies shift uncomfortably-
some laugh to deflect.
A girl with little fingers made a joke.
It wasn't funny, and at my expense-
the only one with long fingers in the
room.
Anger flares and rages like fire-
but as if the oxygen was sucked away, it
died.
Maybe it was to avoid fitting a stereo-
type-
no one wants to be known as angry.
Little fingers, will you ever leave us
alone?



I Matter
Nguyen Hoang Thien Thanh
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam



Faces

Hyeseon Kim

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

B.L.M.

Eva Harris | Somerset, New Jersey

Every person, big or small,
Deserves to be treated equal and tall,
But for many years, it wasn't the case,
Black lives were treated with disgrace.

From slavery to segregation,
Black lives faced discrimination,
They couldn't drink from the same fountains,
Or sit where they wanted on the mountains.

But now we know and we must say,
Black lives matter in every way,
They're just as smart and just as strong,
And they deserve to belong.

Black lives are filled with joy and love,
They're gifts sent from up above,
With laughter, dreams, and talents too,
Just like me and just like you.

So let's stand up and make it clear,
Black lives matter, and were here,
To fight for justice and equality,
For every person, big or small, you see.

RESILIENCE

Gabriella Ricketts | West Hartford, Connecticut

Black Lives Matter, a powerful phrase,
A call for justice in so many ways.
A plea for equality, a plea for change,
A demand for freedom, free from pain.

For too long, African rights were ignored,
Their history and culture, often deplored.
But their journey began in the motherland,
Where they lived in tribes, hand in hand.

From Egypt to Ethiopia, Ghana to Mali,
Their empires were great, their stories rally.
They traded with the world, their wealth renowned,
But their strength and pride, too often put down.

Slavery and colonization, brought such harm,
Their people were treated as chattel, with no alarm.
Their homes and families torn apart,
Their spirits were broken, right from the start.

But they fought back, with courage and might,
Their leaders and heroes, shining bright.
From Nelson Mandela, to Martin Luther King,
Their voices were heard, their message would ring.

Black Lives Matter, a rallying cry,
For justice and equality, we must try.
Their rights must be honored, their voices heard,
Their lives are valued, with every word.



Beginning the End
Andre Chaney
Philadelphia, PA



I'm Fine

I'm Okay
Alexis Cruz
Philadelphia, PA

APOLOGY

Grace Hall | Richardson, Texas

I know that it's a sensitive subject, but it has to be addressed.
It's wrong, it's lunacy, and it's a mess; it's
Going against people who look different than we do.
They have different traditions, sure, but how does that make them
Any less valuable than you?
I would like to apologize, if I could even begin to say the words.
I can't say I know what you have been through, I can't say I've seen
worse.
I don't know what it's like to fear turning into a busy street,
Where your hands are curled into fists, you keep your eyes on your feet.
There are people who look exactly like me, the same tone of skin
The same lifestyle in this terrible world we live in.
Some of those people, they've sinned.
I told you this was going to be a difficult topic
You'd rather be anywhere else, wouldn't you?
Don't leave, please.
Now where was I?
Ah yes.
I'm apologizing for people who don't know my name.
I'm apologizing for people who have no trace of shame,
But I'm apologizing all the same.
People have suffered, because other people decided they didn't belong.
They decided that they weren't superior.
They decided that a certain person or group of people were wrong,
Just judging on the color of their exterior.
These people whose minds are clouded with judgment
Won't listen to the news, they won't listen to the people,
So I guess it'll take a minority, not close to age eighteen,
To say something, to make clear what has been unseen.
Stop it.
I won't ask nicely.

They're a lot stronger than I
I've been begging you kindly.
You are not better than them.
I don't care what clothes you wear, how you fix your hair, or what you
think
Right now.
Stop.
I am apologizing for your crimes and my ancestors, too.
I am apologizing for people who didn't even know the truth.
I can't carry all this guilt, I need you to stop.
We are equals, why can't anybody see?
They shouldn't have to fear walking around, being seen.
Nobody should.
I don't know what it's like for a best friend to die
Because of their gender, sexuality, religion or race
I don't know what it's like to dread a certain place
Or feel as though you're misplaced.
But I do know what it's like to give everyone grace
Everybody gets forgiveness, no matter what they do.
I'm so tired of that, I'm tired of apologizing for you.
This is so hard for me to talk about, I don't get how anyone does it.
It's probably because they are the people who have suffered the most.
I'm still saying sorry, but the burden is heavy.
I can't do this all by myself.
If I keep apologizing for people who make mistakes they're proud of,
By the time I'm on my deathbed, I'll have no more room in my heart to
love.
Please stop.
Because guess what?
I'm done apologizing for you.

RESPECT THE FOUNDATION

Elias M. Hatch | West Hartford, Connecticut

Our base.
The foundation to the world, the economy and our
lifestyles,
is Black people.
We built the world, carrying the burden of slavery on our
backs, protecting ourselves from countless attacks, and
nobody you know can deny the fact,
that Black Lives Matter.

For centuries we've been discriminated against,
set apart from the rest, and treated differently than others.
We don't deserve it, we have done so many things,
to improve and change the world.
Professors, doctors, poets, actors, and everything in
between,
there's one revolutionary Black person filling one of those
roles.
One of them being my father.
Anthony Ryan Hatch,
an African American professor at Wesleyan University,
has led me to believe in myself.
To believe in all of us.
We need to stand together hand in hand, to create an
army, so very grand, to shine our light throughout all the
land.
Showing everyone that Black Lives Matter.

Our harmony together,
like little fingers dancing across the keys of a melodious
grand piano.
We can do anything.
We can show them who we are, and that we deserve our
rights and respect. We're successful, we're funny, talented,
and all.
We'll always be there if one of us takes the fall.
I'll speak my mind, and let out my call. To let you know that
Black Lives Matter.

If I'm being honest, it doesn't matter what race.
It doesn't matter your language, or the color of your face.
It matters if you want to participate in the race of our
rights, battling the rest of them, fighting, pleading.
Doing whatever we can to win.
Lock our arms and walk miles, until our feet ache and
throb. Stand through the storm of any cop, marching up to
the top.
To win this race, this endless job. Proving to the entire
world,
that Black Lives Matter.



Starry Night
Gargi Mondal
San Antonio, Texas

