

## Ain't it Funny by Olawunmi Sodipo

I guess you could say, for most of my life, my blackness has had to be put on hold  
When microaggressions and racial epithets would penetrate my soul  
My pot would bubble up, frothing in anger, and then I'd safely place my blackness on the back  
burner

It wasn't because I wasn't proud of who I was,  
but that it was a necessary survival skill; a tool to be utilized if I ever wanted to somewhat  
"progress" in the world

I also knew my anger would never be labeled as righteous or deemed justifiable because of the  
prevailing Black stereotype of the "aggressive, angry Black woman"  
I eventually learned later in life, although my meekness and proximity to whiteness made me  
more palatable in white spaces, I still would never be fully accepted

Blackness is seen as a condition  
Something needing "to be resolved" with a get well soon card and washed out in the sink of  
white supremacy

Blackness is a grand gesture, a ridiculous caricature with big slapping lips, a wide negro nose,  
painted skin and a watermelon grin

It's fried chicken and biscuits- Aunt Jemima with her crisco and chitlins  
...don't you know that's just what they see?

You want to ask what does Black Lives Matter mean to me?

It means slavery, mass genocide, breeding farms, and whippings

It means, from Black Codes to Jim Crow

Segregation and thousands of lynchings

It's the "red summers" from Tulsa to DC, wiping out Black prosperity

It's Tuskegee going on for forty years and you still expect us to wipe our own tears

It's workers discrimination, Black face, and indoctrination

We will never cooperate and comply

The March on Washington was only the beginning and frankly, Black Lives Matter is not even  
adequate

It will never measure up to these egregious police killings

Black Lives Matter will never be enough because four-hundred years of emotional terrorism and  
trauma can't simply be covered up by three emboldened words on yard signs ouskirting white  
picket fences

I am exhausted from trying to prove that Black Lives Matter...

when I can never make myself human to the world

My existence will forever be a ballad in opposition of my oppressor and a sweet, citrine serenade  
to my ancestors who continue to fight alongside me

And just remember, before you get too comfortable, that the only way out of this cycle is through  
death at the end of a barrel, suicide, or heart disease

And even in your own schizophrenic episode “Black Mental Health Matters” will be muffled out  
by coffee breath and overpriced prescription pills- you rather feed yourself a \$4.89 hamburger  
meal than twist a limb off to pay for it and they ask you how you got diabetes when whole foods  
is an hour bus ride away

Black Lives Matter means white supremacy is still alive and well today

The veil of bigotry is still wavering over this nation  
Uncle Sam will promise Black and Brown folk anything, “hell, I’ll even sell you false promises  
of a free education”

I still hear the memory ringing in a loved one’s ears  
They have ptsd, no college degree- an untreated mental illness and fear  
And I’m still singing it’s been a long time comin’, but Sam Cooke and all of his friends are dead  
They took out MLK, because they got word decolonization was ahead

I am the tail--I mean...I am the head, not the tail

I must apologize

I still have to beat out the self hatred

Learning to love myself is a self-declared occupation

I am Black, beautiful, and bold

Even though I don’t fit the world’s eurocentric mold

I will still say

I will still shout

I will still wail

In between gasps and choking back salted tears

I am vital

I am vital

I am essential

I am life itself