

Black Lives Matter: #BeyondtheHashtag

From the moment we are born, we come out fighting for our place in the world. This is very true for anyone, but I feel this even more deeply as a young black woman in America. As black people, some would say we've been dealt a poor hand of cards. I say, we've shuffled that bad deck and improved our odds. Black Lives Matter is the very fabric of our existence. We all have witnessed the brutal treatment black people experience at the hands of the police. My very first introduction to Black Lives Matter was in 2012 when I learned of Trayvon Martin's death. I remember hearing the news and watching everything unfold in real time. I understood from early on that the Black Lives Matter movement was not just your ordinary hashtag.

I came to learn that Black Lives Matter was a sort of cry for help. It became a global movement, but somehow people found it a controversial statement. It is impossible for me to wrap my head around that belief. I feel a need to speak out on behalf of my community, and it is my duty as an African American woman to fight for justice. The murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor was a very frightening and somber reality. I felt as though I was reeling from seeing live footage and instant updates of the two incidents.

I think Black Lives Matter is a very necessary movement for too many reasons to count. Black people in America have faced prolonged harassment and mistreatment for many centuries. It isn't a novel concept that we get the short end of the stick when it comes to equity and justice. In my 24 years of life, I have witnessed the good, the bad, and everything in between. In 2020, I feel as though I have lived many lives. I have watched tragedy after tragedy befall my people. It is absolutely infuriating to see how little regard we are shown when it comes to our life.

As protesters flocked the streets statewide, demanding justice for George Floyd, I felt hope, terror, and pride rolled into one. It was a very frantic time seeing the protesting, looting, and the horror that followed soon after. I felt proud that my peers were revolting against a system that was set against us from the start. I felt terror because I knew what happened when someone who looked like me tried to make their voice heard. Nonetheless, I contributed what I could at the time. I shared petitions, urged others to do the same, and stayed informed on what was happening. Although it was triggering to receive live updates to my phone, I knew I had to keep track of what was happening. It was the very least I could do.

When it comes to the question: What does Black Lives Matter mean to you?

My answer is and will remain: A fight for basic human existence.

Sincerely,

A black woman in the United States of America