

Reflect & Empower: What Black Lives Matter Means to Me by Alfred Cotto

It was painful. That is all it was. Everything else, every chance given to the cause, every promise made, all of it was pain. What use is pain? What use is being just pain? It is not dignified. It is not kind. And if it is not dignified and it is not kind, then maybe it is not worth anything. Maybe it is better off as nothing. Gone. Dead. Ashes. Rising. Breath. Rebirth. Freedom. Black Lives Matter.

Equality is an arbitrary term. It is to blame for many wars and revolts that never cease to exist. It is as beautiful a word as “perfect” or “normal.” Black people have been fighting for this for centuries.

The pilgrims of the New World knew a lot of manual labor was required to build a new settlement from the ground up. Considering that Africa is just south of Europe, the only home the pilgrims had ever known, it must have seemed reasonable to scoop their former neighbors up from their straw huts and force them to finish the tasks that the pilgrims were simply too lethargic to complete. It was then that a new correlation was born! The darker the skin, the less likely one could succumb to the luxury of laziness.

Major strides have taken place since America was founded. Black people gradually became less of an epitomical burden to society and more of an addition to the mundane confines of America’s principle of life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness. For so long, restrictions were in place, large loopholes that the Declaration of Independence as well as the Amendments had purposely left behind. Decades pass and these legal loopholes slowly begin to be filled by new laws and legislations promising the same exact equality that should have been solidified to begin with.

Black Lives Matter zeros in on completely negating these loopholes to the point of having a definition of equality mirroring that of its white counterpart. Black people are so tired

of being judged and belittled merely for the darker pigments of their skin. They are exploiting all the white cops who rape female prisoners in their cells, who steal drugs confiscated from black people to indulge in their own addictions, and who aggressively suppress black people to the point where they can no longer breathe.

It is painful. We must accept that injustice towards black people continues to occur every single day. We must never give up instilling change as a nation and even as individuals. Why should we let ourselves suffer when the source of the pain subsided long ago? Why can't we all acknowledge, as a country, that every life is precious regardless of gender, race/ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, social status, or some other category mankind places us in from the moment we are born?

Where do I envision this movement taking us as a country? Only time can tell. However, I can still hope for a day that the loopholes our forefathers left behind are filled and leveled enough to walk on towards a brighter tomorrow.