

A Woman's Perspective

Written by

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(Lights fade up showing part of a bodega store front, empty lot and a street. Main character/narrator seen sitting holding a bible. Lights fade out.)

Voice of stage: My name is Breonna Taylor age 26.

(house lights fade back up to show the narrator sitting.)

Narrator: It almost felt like an afterthought when I first heard about Breonna. We had all been swept up at that point with the beating of this pandemic, blurry visions of Ahmad Arbry innocently jogging in a neighborhood before being gun downed and of course the on camera murder of George Floyd. But there was Breonna. Another Black woman unseen, unheard and no justice or anyone to answer for her murder.

My reaction has been like a quiet smoldering in the pit of my stomach waiting to erupt wondering what's the next tragic murder to occur. I am a vulnerable African American woman wondering if I am not safe in my home where can I be. I am wondering what does it say when you are denied justice. Am I not worthy? Despite pleas and outcries and protests nothing has changed and in the eyes of institutions, the Black woman's worth is clearly nothing.

(Lights fade to black. Voice off stage shouts)

Voice Off Stage: My name is Brandon Hendricks age 17.

(Lights fade up. Narrator has now moved closer to center stage and sits.)

Narrator: 2020 has tested us all and our fears over our health and overall safety and then just as we appeared to get a quick brief reprieve, bam! Like a tsunami with no warning NYC is suddenly back in the crime ridden 80s and hit with gun violence. One depressing crime story of bullets with the wrong name after the other.

In an instant, Brandon, this young man's dreams were snatched away. A future king cut down by a bullet with the wrong name. No wait I hate that expression. A bullet didn't kill Brandon. Another man did. Not a system, not politics but another human. Why? This is the question no one can answer. How do I know my child or my loved one is not next? Truth is this plague, this genocide amongst our young people has been going on long before COVID-19. Few have been able to curb it and all we get are promises from leaders to do better, to educate, to bring resources, to not over police. All have been empty resolutions with one tragic loss of a young person after another. Promises where there is no balance between bail reform and prison reform. No balance between over policing and no policing at all. How did I feel after hearing about Brandon? I felt hopeless.

(Lights fade to black. Voice shouts off stage.)

Voice off Stage: My name is Lesandro Guzman-Feliz but you can call me Junior. I am 15.

(Lights Fade Up. Narrator is now positioned by the bodega.)

Narrator: Junior as he was affectionately known to his family and friends was a part of the NYPD Explorers Club. Ironically the night he tragically lost his life, his repeated cries and pleas for mercy did not change the end result. Dozens of witnesses and yet a brutal savage killing happened right in the open. Hearing this story brought to mind the killings that took place during the Rwandan genocide while the world sat by and watched. The help given to young Lesandro during and after the attack was too late to reverse the damage that had been done. Here again, a neighborhood's inability to address the existing gang violence allowed the circumstances for a mob to brutally kill and rob a young man of his future. Lesandro was murdered in one of the most heinous and barbaric ways for what? Here again, another senseless killing took place where those who serve to protect in law enforcement failed to do so.

Junior died without ever knowing why and what he did to deserve it. What made this crime even worse was that he was not the intended target. As a mother I can tell you hearing that your child was accidentally killed because of mistaken identity does little to comfort you. *The only thing more gut wrenching is hearing there was nothing that could have been done to help young Lesandro. Young Lesandro was dead before his promising life even began. We, society as a whole failed him.* My heart ached hearing this story. I ached as a human being. I ached as a God fearing woman. I ached as a mother. I wondered what this child felt in his last moments. I wondered what this child did to deserve this. I thought this could not have been God's will.

(Lights fade. Voice shouts off stage)

Voice off Stage: My name is Rayshard Brooks and I am 27.

(Lights fade up. Narrator is by parking lot)

Narrator: Rayshard's murder happened in the midst of protest across the country regarding police killings of unarmed Black men. I recall seeing video footage of an interview done with Rayshard that was released after the killing. This young man had been in and out of jail for petty crimes that seemed to be related to his addiction problems. A nonviolent young man whose only crime was he lost his way. Yet he was able to eloquently explain what rehabilitation should look like. Something all leaders have failed to do. Instead, this young man was shot while running away with a taser. Footage showed what appeared to be a situation that was not escalating until law enforcement stepped in and made the all too frequent decision to detain a non violent offender. Here was a young man that was so desperate not to go back to a failed system again. And law enforcement that made a fatal choice that stemmed from a nonviolent man who fell asleep in a parking lot. What I heard was someone crying out for help and being failed by a system that just didn't care to help. Again how many times will we say we will do better? How many times are we going to march and protest for change? How many times will society continue to fail the young Rayshards out there? How many times before we not only say enough but actually make a change?

(Lights fade. Voice speaks off stage.)

Voice off stage: My name is George Floyd. I was 47 years old when I died. I was murdered. My murder was captured on TV along with the perpetrator. Bystanders alike all watched as each breath I took inched closer to my last. Bystanders watched as I called out for my dead mother to help me.

(Lights fade up, narrator is standing center stage.)

Narrator: I don't think I ever brought myself to view the entire video footage of Mr. Floyd's death. Perhaps it's the same reason why I couldn't bear to view the open casket pictures of young Emette Till who was murdered and beaten unrecognizable on August 28, 1955.

Each time that footage started on the nightly news of Mr. Floyd I would quickly turn away. Each time wondering is this our worth? Maybe this was as close as we the modern generation would get to life on a plantation where slave owners tortured, punished or humiliated all while other slaves or plantation owners watched. The difference today is of course you can turn away, tune out, choose to make a change,

choose to vote, choose to disconnect. All of the above acceptable in their own right or are they?

What truly is the right answer? Can a country change without acknowledgement of it's wrong doings? If the problems are interwoven so deeply so profoundly that we do not know where to begin, how do we ever move forward...I don't think it's hopeless. I do think it starts with education, the truth and real change. Truth there are two dueling pandemics here. One from 2020 and one that has been ongoing for centuries in multiple parts of the world. The latter is social and exists merely based on differences. Differences in race, differences in sexual preferences, differences in religion and on and on and on. The very beauty of us as humans should be celebrated and embraced across the globe. Instead it instokes fear whether in law enforcement or fellow countrymen and self hatred when violent crimes are committed against each other of the same race.

I am not hopeless. I simply can offer you my perspective. As a woman, as an African American woman, as a God fearing proud Christian wife and mother, I do believe in my country. I do believe in this world. And I do believe despite all of this loss, there are people like me that want change and it will happen. I promise Breonna, Brandon, Lesandro, Rayshard, George Floyd and so many others, you will not be forgotten. We will never ever forget..

(Narrator lays down on stage face down. Lights fade)

The End