On May 25th a brother walked up to me and said "Duke! They did it again Cops killed another Black man." These are words that have become all too common but I made sure to watch the local news and see what happen and how. When the footage began I sadly expected a shooting. Instead I saw George Floyd on the ground with officer Chauvin kneeling on his neck. I held my breath watching a public lynching.

I can't breathe...

As the words rasp out all I can think is there is no way this is an officer involved murder. George Floyd is alive and still talking. There are people shouting "You are killing him!" There are officers standing right there. Above all else there is so much time to fix this.

I can't breathe...

This image is symbolic of the American experience in a Black body. Held down with the "authority" kneeling on your neck suffocating you. Crying out that you can't breath, and don't want to die. While other authority figures, the ones who will later be called the good ones or even spared due to inaction, watch in complacent silence. With your peers and community looking on screaming that the abuse is killing us. You scream one last time looking for help from the ones you love, the ones who have protected you from this abuse throughout your life. In George Floyd's case your mother, but before help can come.

I can't breathe...

Why don't these people recording put down their phones and help? The thought is
answered no sooner than it is asked. In an instant officer standby will turn
the can of pepper spray into a firearm, and the camera people into interfering with
officer charges or worse more death.

I cant breath...

These officers with him just have to say something and this is over. Every
argument I ever had about cops is on public display. I have been told
they are not all bad. Do your job and stop him. Detain your coworker, arrest
him for attempt murder. Do anything, but please don't just stand there.
Ignore the blue wall, ignore the status quo, ignore years of tradition, but please
don't ignore George Floyd's pleas. He doesn't want to die.

I cant breath...

This is a lynching. No judge, no jury, just an executioner taking the
life of a Black man emblazoned by his backup. This is the Klan my great
grandmother so deeply feared. This is the lynching mobs that made my grandfather
to afraid to vote. I have heard stories of public lynchings, advertised in the
papers as events. Spectators coming from far and wide to see the Black
body suffocated and gather souvenirs. Billie Holiday's strange fruit plays
in my head.

I cant breath...

Who is going to save George Floyd? In the moment I feel as powerless
as the people filming. I feel powerless to save my son, who in this time
only wants to be reassured he is safe. I feel powerless to save my peers, who
Are enraged by the continuous disregard for our lives, by the people paid to maintain our lives. I feel powerless to save my elders, like George Floyd, who are losing faith that change will come in their lifetime.

I can't breathe...

What can we do to finally get them to understand, the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness is ours also. We must march like Dr. King, organize like Bobby Seale and Dr. Newton, be inclusive like Fred Hampton, unapologetically Black and outspoken like Malcolm X, James Baldwin, and Maya Angelou, Fight like Nat Turner, make the world aware like Bryan Stevenson, Speak to their soul like George Jackson, Angela Davis, like Kendrick and Pac.

I can't breathe...

America must finally discuss and atone for slavery. Not dismiss it, not forget it, not treat it like a shameful secret. Discuss it fully and fix or demolish every system that came after it, that maintains the bondage of every African American. Generations later physically and psychologically in all Americans the conditions persist. America as a whole must understand that slavery will never be in our rearview mirror, it's the apparition in the backseat of the vehicle directing us all on where to go and how to get there. Teach slavery, speak about slavery and if you feel uncomfortable address it, but we can't grow if it is ignored.

George Floyd cant breath
I cant breath
We cant breath

Written by
Andrew Dickson