

Racism
with a side
of sickness

Poems by Jakeel Harris

©2020 by Jakeel Harris
Printed in the United States

The concept of the book was inspired by Tobe Nwigwe and *The Pandemic Project*. These poems were all written out of quarantine during the Pandemic days of 2020, where racism and COVID-19 combine to make a new concoction of ignorance and oppression.

Table of Contents

Racism with a side of sickness.....	2
Over It.....	3
Denial.....	4
Becoming trendy.....	5
Black is King.....	6
Make it home.....	7
Periodt.....	8
Protect Black Women.....	9
Hood PTSD.....	10
Backlash.....	11
3 things I affirmed in quarantine.....	12
Black and mistreated.....	13
Rooting for Black Folk.....	15
Lift every voice and sing.....	16
We Lit.....	18
Life on Earth.....	19
Understanding Frankenstein’s Father to an extent: Message to my unborn Son.....	22
My mind, my decisions.....	25
Confused Masculinity.....	26
Priorities.....	27
Worship.....	28
Love is.....	30

Loving me again.....	31
Self-love	32
Dear self.....	33
Boys will be boys	34
Stay quiet.....	36
Lessons.....	37
Pretending	38
I'm only Human.....	39
Miracles	40
Tolerating	43
Soul searching.....	44
Bear with me.....	45
Wasting Time.....	46
Realization	47
Begging.....	48
Envious	49
Limits	50
Secrets	51
Lines.....	52
Purpose.....	53
Survival Tactics.....	54
Journey	55
Selection	56
Worth	57

Butterflies	58
The phone-call weeks after a one nightstand with Courage.....	60
Medium Hood.....	64
In times like this	66
Skydive	67
The day you walked past me.....	68
Mamba Mentality	70
Critics Say.....	76
Realizing.....	78
Invalid Research	80
Thoughts on Neighborhood Watch	84
Being a Felon.....	86
KICKED OUT/Taking a sick day.....	88
Normalize	90
Soulmate.....	91
Art.....	93
Dominate.....	94
Fetish.....	96
Reclaiming	97
#UBFamily	98
Don't try me	99
Message to the white woman who wanted to argue about #blacklivesmatter in Costco...	101

To the non-Black people who say the N-word/I want to say the N-word.....	102
Disconnect.....	105
Change (Create Happiness And Navigate Goodness Everyday)	106
Courage	108
To Our Future President.....	110
2020 Presidential Debates	111
Distance.....	113
Reasons.....	114
Occupied	115
Dismantle	117
Lessons from the Moon	118
To Black people trying to figure life out....	119
Things About Her.....	120
How Black Are You	122
America the Hypocritical.....	125
Overcoming Myself.....	130
I got questions.....	133
To the person who asked me to stop talking about racism so much in my poems.....	134
In the good ole days.....	136
Allegory of A Woman	137
Catcallin'.....	139
Neutrality.....	141

Still Missing You.....	142
Love with an Open Bar.....	143
Meals	145
Flowers.....	146
Haiku About Being Black in America	149
Haiku About Being Black Part II.....	150
Memory Lane.....	153
Family Reunion.....	155
To Hood Niggas	156

Racism
with a side
of sickness

Black people!
look in the mirror
and repeat after me:

I am enough

I am enough

I am enough

I am enough

I am enough

and don't go out into society
until you believe it without doubts

because the world will try to convince you
that you are unfit for existing
and unworthy
of acknowledgment

Racism with a side of sickness

you deny police brutality
systemic oppression
and black importance
in the same breath
that's suppressed by
a virus that you don't
even acknowledge

you protest
being inconvenienced
while those around you are dying
while those who are melanated
are being murdered

you expect the world
to be silent about America's mishaps
yet be loud about catering to your needs
you say screaming for your "rights"
is mentally exhausting
oh, how tiring it must be
to have to figure out
how to sleep in privilege
while the rest of us are awake like insomniacs
alert during these oppressive times
burdened by the nightmares that haunt our realities

Over It

Black folk aren't asking you to step down from the
roles you've played in television shows
we are not begging for your pity or sympathy
because your white guilt finally realized blackface was
unacceptable
we are not screaming requests of cancellations for
brand logos we deemed racist decades ago
we have not told you that we are reminded of the
shackled nightmares that enslavement brings
when occupying the largest room in our households
we have been yelling outbursts of our lives mattering,
angrily justifying our existence
and y'all still don't get it
we simply desire not be killed anymore by the same
people deputized to keep the safety of our futures
alive
we call for the arrest of the thugs in badges who
murdered Breonna Taylor and the prosecution of
those gunning down Black folk for sport
because we know
that no matter whether
we are innocent of crimes
or guilty as FUCK
the response is always to slaughter
trigger so quick to kill, to massacre, to destroy
and we are tired of explaining how that's impacting us
we want to live
is that so hard to understand

Denial

to deny racism exists
is to benefit from its consequences
or be free from its wrath

just because its impact is invisible
in your life experiences
doesn't mean it ceases to exist

- *Racism didn't disappear*

Becoming trendy

when the tear gas clears
and the presence of blood
is cleaned off of the streets
will you still speak on the importance
of Black lives mattering?

when politicizing about Black death
stops being so trendy
what will your Instagram posts consist of?
will your Facebook rants still be attached to solidarity?

will you continue to vocalize your concerns about the
mistreatment of me and my people?

or will you just reminisce about
the time you became trending on Twitter
because you tweeted about a city burning?

- *thoughts from someone who can't afford to neglect the
reality his blackness presents*

Black is King

undeniable greatness
is within the coding of your DNA
it spews out royalty

your melanin protects
this brilliance
absorbs the sun's essence
holds onto it
no matter how hot
or luminescent

your glow will remind you
that you'll shine
even during those dark hours
where you spend time
setting aside your pride

- *Black is King*

Make it home

I pray that Black boys
make it home
in time
to live to see another day.

I pray that Black girls
will grow up to be women
who don't violently disappear.

I pray.
I pray.
I pray.
I pray.

hoping that the world will see
how golden Black people
really are.

- *Black is golden*

Periodt

Black women
don't have to be
well-tempered
in order to be respected

they have every right
to express their emotions
however the fuck they'd like to

just because their ability to confidently
convey an attitude that doesn't meet your
expectations
makes you feel uncomfortable

shouldn't spark the silencing of their voice

your unstable idea of entitlement
will have you anticipating worship
from a population of women
who set their own standards

- *Black women need respect*

Protect Black Women

protecting Black women
goes beyond the ones who have impacted your life
it's more than respecting their presence
on days you choose to recognize it

protecting Black women
is shattering masculinity
uplifting their voices higher than your own
while using yours to praise their existence
it's stopping with the comparison to other women
and to settle that argument
ain't nothing like a Black woman

if you're not willing to silence your privilege
open your ears to hear their experience
meet their needs without complaints
and lay your life on the line
so that hers doesn't disappear
then protecting Black women
isn't something you truly embody

there are levels to this shit
and Black women have suffered long enough
while you sit there and ponder
if your strong enough to support them

- *Black is safety*

Hood PTSD

nightmares of nights scared
questioning if this night will be your last
from bullets to sirens
your nerves have desensitized these sounds as normal
window taps bring flashbacks
of flashing red and blue lights cascading
on the back of your car window
trigger fingers trigger terrifying memories
of severe anxiety
emotional avoidance becomes distinct behavior
patterns
cycled thoughts of nervousness
take over your mentality
grinding is the only coping mechanism
you can only get it, how you live it
and you live it rough
paycheck to paycheck
you start to feel hopeless about the future
told the acceptable way to heal from it
is through anger
violence becomes medication
but no one's alleviated from this pain
you bring home
nothing but exhaustion
and think everything's okay
it's not
you need to see someone about these hood dreams

- *Black men need therapy*

Backlash

don't provoke Black folk
and await our compliance
 expect backlash
we are not going to allow
anyone to get comfortable
harassing and dehumanizing us

 you will be handed with
more than just life lessons
 the day you decide
 to let your comfort zone
stretch into Black boundaries

- *Black is vast and powerful*

3 things I affirmed in quarantine

1. there's no such thing as too much anime....that
shit is amazing
 2. solitude and reflection can transform negligence
into appreciation
 3. despite how others perceive my Blackness, it
stands completely unbothered wallowing in its
excellence
- *Black is excellent*

Black and mistreated

we've blessed this world with everything
and with everything
they prove
that they don't deserve us

but we stay making an impact
despite the circumstances

- *Black is a gift*

As Issa Rae once said:

“I’m rooting for everybody Black.”

and I stand behind that statement

Rooting for Black Folk

encouragement will plant love
into the soil where our roots grow

Lift every voice and sing

back in the day
before I was cruising the streets of Oceanside
in my Nissan Maxima
I was exploring the confines of my city
on public transportation, looking for adventure

to avoid having unnecessary interactions
with those some would call deranged
on the 309 to town center north
I would often plug in my headphones
and listen to the Black National Anthem
having mental conversations with our Lord and
Savior until I reached my destination

I remember this one time
when attempting
to get GODs attention
I tried to lift my voice so high

that it would soar through the skies
and be heavy enough to shake the gates of heaven
that my rejoicing wouldn't just rise
it would escalate exponentially
but on that day
I was met with so much white resistance
that my songs of hope
were remixed into hymns of fear
I forgot the lyrics to my daily resilience
changed pace to something more reassuring
instrumentals that implant survival in them
no chorus
no lyrics
just something familiar to help me drown out the
sounds of racism
and once the angst subsided
I was able to communicate
with GOD again

We Lit

on Twitter

I saw one of my white followers retweet
“being Black is kinda dangerous, but it’s pretty dope”

dope like the stuff the CIA brought into Black
communities
injecting us with poverty lines of cocaine
a high that has lasted for generations
but we lit fam
lit like front yard cross burnings
lawns becoming drive-in movie theaters
screening our struggle
where you can choose to ignore our pain
the same pain that sits in the palm of your phone
screen
streamed uploads of racist slurs, racial profiling
making a mockery of “Karen”
watching lifeless Black bodies become hashtags
because some officer decided
that the fear rushing through their body
was enough justification to suck the life out of one
when I saw that post
I thought myself
being Black is a blessing
most of you
will never understand

Life on Earth

cities have become
nothing more than places
for the privilege
to flex their lack of knowledge

they run around
exercising their right
to misunderstand

SHOUTING OUT NONSENSE

wonder why their opinions
are out of breath
fortunately for them
their entitlement
has always seem
to work out
in their favor

and as their ignorance gets stronger
they make it harder
for everyone else
to lift themselves up

INHALE.
BREATHE.
EXHALE.

REFLECT.
PROCESS.
ADAPT.
ADVANCE.

Some of the simplest and most beautifully impactful aspects of life are the rekindling of connections, genuine kindness, gratefulness, reflection and appreciation

- My therapist

Understanding Frankenstein's Father to an extent: Message to my unborn Son

Son,
when you are born
my world will come to a complete stop
time will be flipped on its head
and everything around me will just slow down
excitement will fill these lungs
tears of joy will fall down my face
like streaming waterfalls
happiness will seize control over my smile
and I won't be able to put you down for a second
but shortly after the adrenaline fades
fear will rush through my body
as it knows
that I am not prepared to raise a black boy in this
world
where people see monster
before they see human creation (child)
a world that sees chaos in his eyes
where I see beauty
where I see innocence
where I see myself

Son,
when you open your eyes
you'll be greeted with so much love
that your heart will beat twice as fast
it will be a bit overwhelming
I apologize in advance
I've been anticipating your arrival for some time now

when you take your first breath
the moment will be magical
everything inside you will start moving with purpose
your organs will start to communicate
you'll have plenty of opportunities in the future to
decipher what they are expressing
just know
the blood pumping inside you is partly mine
it's saying we are alive
don't let anyone spill us

when you go out into the real world
out from the security of my overprotective barriers
you'll experience so much judgement
some people just lack understanding
when it comes to the skin you will embody
some simply
don't share the same appreciation for it
that I will instill in you
it will be upsetting
and triggering
times it will be scary
and honestly this feeling never really goes away
I know exactly how you'll feel at this time
wondering if it will ever stop

wondering why it happens
and yes
I experience it too

but son
the day you are brought onto this Earth
the day my world stops
I promise
to never leave your side
when the hate comes
I promise
to always love you
through your mistakes
and accomplishments
I promise
that you will never have to worry
or question
if I ever regret creating you

Son,
there is nothing you can do
to stop me from loving you

My mind, my decisions

men need to shut the fuck up

and silence their opinions

when it comes to women

making decisions

about anything they believe

is important for them to live

happily, healthily, and full of independence

Confused Masculinity

masculinity doesn't even know
what it wants
nevertheless
men never question it

instead

they'll
belittle a woman's existence
but ask for her presence
demand her obedience
but beg for her attention
diminish her emotions
but request her love

men live in the constant condition
of hypocrisy and confusion
but cannot fathom
why they cause so much destruction
leaving emotional wreckage in places
their entitlement should've never gained access to

- *Men have so much learning to do*

Priorities

if I put my feelings on display for you
I'm trying to get you to see
how important you are to me

so significant
that I'm making my emotions accessible
for your self-gratification

but if you ask me
to place my goals on hold
just so you can feel entitled to my attention
understand that
while my affection for you is unquestionable
it will not be enough to justify
the sacrifice of my aspirations

know that
I will never make you a priority
just because it's convenient
but I will put effort
into maintaining our relationship
if it proves to be worth it

Worship

pyramids remind us
that even temples of worship
can have a tainted history
of oppression

so, let it be known
that one does not have to
attend church
to be religious

the relationship one has with GOD
should be a private one
and sometimes the places
we choose to openly express our love
to this Holy Spirit
engages in judgement before acceptance

Open is who I am
Love is how I want to be
Fact is, I am proud to be me
Me, the embodiment of candor qualities
the result of being closed off to those who have
always had an interest in fucking with my energy

Love is

there's something so unusual about metamorphosing
your affection for someone
into the aspect of you not being able to
recognize the person in the mirror

if it's not attached to a coupled identity
you get amnesia
forgetting your own individuality
we consume this belief
and call it love

but love
is not losing yourself inside someone
until your souls intertwine
it's being able to give someone everything they
deserve
without sacrificing who you are
and when you provide that same energy to yourself
you will not just give love
you will become it

Loving me again

when you see these scars
you'll get curious
as to what adventures
provoked their creation
and I'll tell you

this is what it looks like
when you're learning
how to fall in love with yourself
all over again

- *My heart telling me about those scars*

Self-love

self-love is
realizing that your
inherent worth is vast
and certain

when people start to question its significance
or label it as selfish
embed yourself in more of it

let them see the importance of its impact

- *Self-love is the best love*

Dear self

you don't need permission
to love yourself openly

you don't have to hide it
nor be ashamed of it

it doesn't have to come with
restrictions

stop letting other people
dictate the way in which
you need to show love to yourself

Boys will be boys

I'll admit
I used to believe that masculinity
and destruction
were the same action
that it was measured
by the amount of trauma
you could suppress
that it was shown
through the projection of anger

I was raised by men
who taught me to turn my fists
into weapons of mass aggression
at any sight of opposition
posing a threat to my manhood
I became a soldier of neglected feelings
like the men in my family before me
this tradition has been
passed down for as long as I can remember

I served two tours in fear of expressing myself
never really gained the courage to be vulnerable
relied heavily on my rage to increase my survival
chances
I've never lost a battle
no matter the opponent

often times
I didn't realize
I was my own enemy
leaving each arena
bruised and confused
stuck in combat with my emotions
fighting to keep them imprisoned
because they have been deemed
domestic terrorists
for their warfare of sensitivity

I'll admit
I've never learned
how to end a war
without friendly casualties
but I'm trying

I know it takes time
and understanding
to find a way
to turn these hands
into tools
to pry open
someone who is so used
to being closed off
I'm working on it
slowly but surely
appreciating and experiencing
true emotional processing

Stay quiet

I hope
the susurrous sounds of doubt
stuck in the back of my mind
don't figure out
how unstable my anxiety is

I hope it doesn't realize
the lies I've created
to help them
stay dormant

or the exaggerated assertions told
to encourage them to stay quiet
because if they are too loud
they'll wake my insecurities out of their slumber
and we all know the kind of monster that they'll turn
into when disturbed out of their comfort
King Kong of sadness
navigating the jungle of depression
fighting this dinosaurs age old battle
with mental illness

I hope
my doubts never gain the courage to speak up
that they will continue to whisper silently
so I can ignore them
and carry on with confidence

Lessons

heartbreak taught me
to cherish the moments I have
where I can show love to you
because there will be times
where I don't make treating you right a priority

- *Talking to my heart*

Pretending

I had to experience disappointment
in order to comprehend
that I was continuously pretending
to be ready for relationships
with people
interested in me
because they welcomed my flaws
and characteristics
without conditions

when you live a lie
for so long
it will become your reality
regardless of the impact
it has on innocent victims

I had to challenge
the notion
that love waits for no one
and be patient with my healing
because if I didn't recover properly
from the wounds left from previous partners
I'd continue to force future ones
to deal with the consequences of me settling

I'm only Human

having weak moments
doesn't mean you are broken
having weak moments
makes you incapable of perfection
and that's
the quality
that makes you human

Miracles

unintentional happenings
can birth
beautiful consequences too
not everything
has to go according to plan
to be considered successful
and when these spectacular phenomena occur
welcome these miracles

the sex
the love
the care
the hours spent
coming up with thousands
of reasons
why we will always be together

- *it was all good until it wasn't*

evolve in every part of your life
and the quality of your interactions,
relationships and partnerships
with people
will begin to expand in value

Tolerating

no more bearing through
situations
that are not good for you

you shouldn't have to
cope with
tolerating circumstances
that are bad for your mental health

it's time to prioritize
your stability over
making sure
everyone else's needs
are fulfilled

once you properly
navigate the energy
around you
you can determine
if certain people
deserve your attention

Soul searching

I hope
in all that time
you spend soul searching

you refuse to leave
until you find
what you've been looking for

Bear with me

bear with me
as I am
trying to make better
use of these fears

I am trying to turn
them into
something worth holding
onto

Wasting Time

just because you are working out the details
on how to be honest with yourself

doesn't mean you can expect someone to be patient
about receiving answers on whether or not
you want to be involved with them

the vagueness in your intentions
doesn't provide any type of reassurance
there needs to be an indication
that you are not there to waste their time

when you decide to commit yourself to someone
you are telling them
that the energy they put into your relationship
isn't going to be taken for granted

- *Don't commit with uncertain interests*

Realization

when you've grown accustomed
to being controlled in a relationship
being presented with space as a healing option
will feel similar to rejection

independence will feel like dismissal
when all it really is supposed to do
is show you that you're the one
in charge of making decisions
about your own healing process

Begging

never beg anyone for anything
that includes time
attention
and love
even when you need those things the most

don't let people think
that your happiness is dependent on them
don't let them feel like
they have the power to control you

Envious

let them hate
let them envy you
but never let them
take away your light

that's the thing
that shines bright in you

- *Your spark is sacred*

Limits

create restrictions
around your positive qualities too
generosity can turn into depletion
without boundaries

understand what you're willing
to handle
then enforce it with purpose
before you burnout
and exhaust all your kindness

- *Kindness should be protected too*

Secrets

let our love be
the greatest secret
that we keep to ourselves

- *Talking to self-esteem*

Lines

there's a fine line between
the acknowledgement and acceptance
of your feelings
and dwelling and living in them with the belief that
they cannot change

sometimes
our circumstances, conditions and trauma
influences us to think
that negativity has to be permanent
in our growing environments

the thing about life is
while it teaches us
many lessons
it forgets that some people
view their philosophies
from different perspectives
and others
have never agreed
with their teaching methods
or benefitted from its content

Purpose

if there is no empathy
in your heart

ask yourself

what purpose determines your actions?

ask yourself

is your sense of identity disappearing?

ask yourself

what defines your soul?

- *Your purpose is just as important as your actions*

Survival Tactics

keeping to yourself
can be a survival tactic
when those around you
are trying to contaminate your surroundings
with fatalistic attitudes
attempting to poison
your peace of mind

- *things I learn in quarantine*

Journey

follow the path
that makes the most sense for you
and if that leads you into the wild
where danger is lurking
transform into whatever is necessary
to stay in the continued state of living
until you find yourself

once you gain some
newfound understanding
come back to civilization
trusting the experiences
of that journey

Selection

be selective about
who you keep around you

if you choose to place support
in your surroundings

you'll begin to notice
how steady
your unstable thoughts become

- *your support system can be the balance you need*

Worth

whether you are surrounded
by millions
or stuck in isolation
don't let loneliness
have you questioning
your worth

- *your value won't change unless you force it too*

Butterflies

fact
butterflies are cold-blooded insects
their transparent wings cannot
establish flight
if brought under cool temperatures

they are rendered immobile
if ever caught in a chilly situation
this crucial detail
in their genetic makeup
forces them to rely heavily
on their atmospheres
for survival

fact
butterflies often only live for a few weeks
and in that time
they focus all of their energy
on eating
mating
and learning new strategies
to avoid being consumed while breathing

they camouflage so well
that invisibility becomes a personality trait
sometimes
predators see through the fear

so butterflies
make themselves seem more poisonous
than they actually are
to keep enemies at bay

fact
I can relate
I too am afraid that the world will devour me
I too cloak myself to avoid confrontation
I too pretend to be more toxic than I am
just to evade being approached
I too am trying to figure out
how to best make use
of the time I have left
on this Earth

The phone-call weeks after a one nightstand with Courage

RING* *RING
RING* *RING
RING* *RING
RING* *RING

you have reached the voice mailbox of Courage
please leave your name and situation
after the beep
and I'll respond
when it's convenient

BEEP

hi, it's me
the one you promised
to be there for
the one who put all their trust
into your commitments

I haven't heard from you
since that wild night out
with my inhibitions
and was just wondering
if I'll ever see you again

press 1 if you are satisfied with this message

your message has been sent goodbye

CLICK

RING* *RING

RING* *RING

RING* *RING

RING* *RING

you have reached the voice mailbox of Courage
I currently am dodging your calls
so please leave your name and complaint
after the beep
and I'll happily delete your message
to avoid confrontation

BEEP

me again, I just wanted to ask you some questions

why did you disappear
when the problems
caused by your confidence
entered the room
are we ever going to finish that conversation
about you becoming more consistent
or will you continue to reschedule
this appointment
to a time
where you don't feel pressured

press 1 if you are satisfied with your message

press 2 to erase and record

message erased, leave your message after the beep

BEEP

please come back to me soon

message marked as urgent

your message has been sent goodbye

CLICK

support is validation displayed

it will fuel my purpose

on days where I feel empty

Medium Hood

I was raised by a low-income family
in areas where poverty
robbed us of basic necessities
so naturally
I've got some hood tendencies

I learned how to create meals
out of snacks that gourmet kitchens
could never match
turned hand me downs
into fresh fits
to pick up women
even with my high waters
I never had a leg up

I discovered how to mask struggle
by finessing on the regular
I've adapted this hood mentality
to code switching
which has benefitted me
professionally and educationally
but honestly
was often asked to forget my voice in those spaces
I don't recommend it
unfortunately, I normally complied
until one too many meetings
where Blackness was being condemned
caused me to unleash this explosive attitude
that brought back recollections of playground
fisticuffs

ghetto hallucinations of a yo' momma joke that went
too far
that to say
I no longer contain these opinions
like mysterious secrets
I vocalize my gift
like heavenly blessings

as a result
I have secured 6 degrees
a higher education job
where I teach the value of self-awareness
to the next generation
without sacrifice to my being
I guess I've grown up to be medium hood
meaning, from 9-5
I am striving to have a positive impact
on my students, coworkers and institution
so long as my identities and purpose remain un-
attacked
I'm patient with their ignorance and use it as
teachable moments
but the instant 5:01 hits
tolerance goes out the window
any voice that sounds like conflict
pointed in my direction
will see a shift in my demeanor
best believe if you press me
you will get these hands
because I did not forget the survival lessons taught on
hood pavements
I did not forget where I came from and I never will

In times like this

it is times like these
where GOD's existence
seems more figment
than reality

but it is times like this
where faith has to be stronger
than the will to abandon
hope of progression

#RIP Kobe, Gigi, John and the other passengers

#RIP Chadwick Boseman

#RIP to the innocent victims of police brutality

and negligence

#RIP to the guilty ones too

#RIP 2020

Skydive

watching someone
fall out of love with you
is like going skydiving
for the first time

you don't know what to expect
but you know
that one mistake and everything
can go from exhilarating memory
to eminent danger
you understand that
you may feel some discomfort
when it's all over
you may even fall upon feeling the impact
from crashing down at high speeds

it may hurt
may leave you a nice reminder
in the form of a scar
but eventually you will get up
although you might need a helping hand
you'll get there eventually and heal
though it will take time and effort

hopefully this experience
will prepare you
for the next adventure you decide to take

The day you walked past me

the moment our paths crossed
my body forgot how to operate
causing my behavior to react
in what I can only describe as
unexplainable

to help you envision the scenario
I'll illustrate the strange phenomena
that impacted my bodily organs

on that day
my tongue swallowed my voice
trapped my confidence in the middle of my throat
saliva covered nervousness all over my language
desire slipped and crashed directly into my larynx
leaving me speechless

on that day
I observed someone so fine
that the rods and cones in my eyes
had to have an emergency meeting
with my optic nerves to decide
that you
were the most vibrant thing
they have ever seen

calling the decision an ode to Q-tip
so vibrant and vivacious
nothing has ever come close
to matching your beauty

on that day
my knees weakened
legs became two icicles
stuck in awe
hands losing control of their stability
all I could do
was wave uncontrollably
with a facial expression saying
“please approach me”
you didn’t

on that day
I dreamt about
how your hair bounced like gymnastic follicles
how your smile commanded the sidewalks
how you strolled as if joy was in your footsteps

on that day
I woke up in cold sweats
with an adrenaline provoked heartbeat
and hope
that fate will have us meeting again

Mamba Mentality

Back in 06' I was in high school
basketball courts
were like sacred sanctuaries
I spent many hours in this haven
putting faith into my athleticism
praying I never got crossed up
or experienced hang-time baptisms

every so often
me and some family members
would put on sermons so epic
you'd catch the Holy Ghost
just by seeing our dedication

we followed the path of mamba mentality
to guide our natural born blessings
into talent

On January 22nd, 2006
Kobe Bean Bryant put up 81 points against a Toronto
Raptors squad consisting of Mike James, a young
Chris Bosh, a veteran Jalen Rose
and a team full of potential
making NBA history as the second-highest points
scored total by a single player

when asked about his performance
even the Mamba himself said he was stunned

believed something took over his body
such as a snake like decision-making process
mass producing precision and a will to overcome
an 18-point deficit
this made getting that dub (W/win) possible

his opponents thought his jump-shot
must have been heaven sent
as they watched him execute this feat with grace
I too observed this miracle in all its glory
wanted to spread word of this legend
like David and Goliath

it was in that moment
where I learned
to never doubt persistence

don't let this pandemic
force you to treat me
worse than I deserve

you better find the energy
to be good to me

- *reminder for myself*

when you have absolute certainty
in your ability
to love wholeheartedly
fear will dissipate
and provide you with enough energy
to make it through the next day
and that kind of strength
allows you hold onto your beliefs
with trust
that you will be guided
to the exact place
you're intended to be

will the people around you describe your
companionship as compassionate
when the sands of your time left on this Earth runs
out

or will they mourn a burdensome heart
that had the opportunity to love openly

just a Black boy
trying to enjoy joy
before he learns
his smile threatens
white comfort

Critics Say...

it has been said
that my poems are too repetitive
that I use the same literary terms in different poetic
sentences
that my pieces of perceived art
don't convey my vast knowledge of the English
dictionary
basically
my written passages
have been categorized as elementary
kindergarten literature
not mature enough to be advanced in nature
simple in stature
telling complex stories
that become easily digestible
for everyone's reading desires

I'll be honest
these criticisms used to
slice through my ego like butter
spreading hesitance throughout my creative process
like it wasn't hard enough to learn
that the pain I created by opening up traumatic
wounds
was necessary for me
to bleed this vulnerability on journal pages
like trying to write the right words to describe
something deeply distressing
that you haven't even confronted yet

isn't difficult as fuck
sorry for my vulgar choice of words

since it has been expressed
that there is a need to see my extensive vocabulary
in action
to somehow validate my “poet” status

I'll undertake this vacuous escapade
to utilize a variety of eloquent language
to elucidate my moral episodes, debatable
assumptions on life, and astute observations,
to an audience of eager critics
who could never connect to it

I bet they'll have something to say to this

Realizing

to those who need to hear it
it doesn't matter how much love
you have for someone

if you can't translate it into a language
they understand
or into an image they can recognize

uncertainty will validate their insecurities in an
unstable relationship
and you'll never get your point across
no matter
how much you try to speak it into existence

the problem with loving tirelessly
is that we keep trying to communicate affection
in the same dialect as misunderstanding

the depth of your love
will showcase your commitment to patience

the adaptability of your expectations
will reveal your efforts towards establishing
understanding

the intertwining of these concepts
will strengthen your connection
and keep miscommunication
from entering your relationships

Invalid Research

after decades of research
we have finally discovered
the top three things
Black men are afraid of

through three pivotal studies
we have ultimately decided
that the following
are the most influential components
in inciting fear in this population

Fatherhood. Emotions. Death.

1. Fatherhood

it has been found
that Black men
have a higher likelihood of spending more time in
prison
than time spent on raising their kin
we looked at the statistics
and came to the conclusion
that they use imprisonment
as a form of parental avoidance

our data suggests
that 1 in every 3rd potential Black father
will use this technique to escape paternal duties

some apparent limitations
to this finding is
we didn't take oppression into consideration
we've also been manipulating the variables
to fit our narrative

2. Emotions

we surveyed over a thousand Black men
from the city of Wakanda
on the aspect of their thoughts
towards expressing their emotions

shortly succeeding the analysis of their answers
we were able to come to this important implication:
Black men are terrified of their feelings

below are some participant responses
to our question **“why are Black men so angry?”**

- “maybe because society gives us so many reasons to”
“probably has something to do with racism”
- “maybe my broken idea of masculinity contributes to
this”
- “often times that’s the only thing that is expected of
us”
- “sometimes we are taught to punch our way into
opportunities and out of problems”
- “at times anger is lighter to carry than the burdens
that come from being vulnerable”
- “mostly due to the way society treats us”
- “it has been a tool of survival for generations”

3. Death

since we didn't want to be insensitive
due to this topic
we asked one Black man we knew
if they'd participate in this case study
he agreed
but asked to remain anonymous
so for the sake of protecting his identity
we called him
"The Black Spokesperson"
he explained to us
that Black men are afraid of death
well maybe not death itself
because we all know
one day our time will come
but the realization that
there are just so many things
that have been
designed, established and socialized
to kill Black progression
or normalize contentment with
Black bodies moving on to a better place
way before it gets handed its eviction notice
but that is just one Black man's perspective
ask another and the results may vary

Thoughts on Neighborhood Watch

some white people think
they are equivalent to the law
because they know two of them
that aid them in escaping repercussions
to their racially motivated actions

the 1st and 2nd amendment
these protect them from feeling guilty
for what they believed was defending their livelihood
while their skin shields them from consequences
of taking, harming and harassing Black life

dear white people,

we will not give you some pretentious title like ally
because you haven't been overtly oppressive
in our presence
what you do when we're not around is also taken into
consideration
what you say about us when we've angered you
matters
you do not deserve
a ceremony thrown in your honor
because you stood up for marginalized populations
you shouldn't be compensated for calling out your
family members
although your efforts are appreciated
they shouldn't only come
because you're expecting recognition

sincerely,

oppressed people

p.s. this applies to everyone with privilege

Being a Felon

born in a neighborhood
that reinforced survival
over
growth
because opportunities
avoided our city
like government assistance

grew up believing
that committing crimes
were only regarded as such
when attached to jail sentences
and everything else in between
were just the necessary strategies of grinding

thought that struggle
was just as ordinary
as frequently missed meals

engaged in some mistakes
in my late adolescence
and was sent to prison
to answer for my teenage problems

following my release
a desire to place good
back into the world
influenced my purpose
but was disturbed to learn
that my delinquent status

stifled progression in bettering
my community
discovered that my rights
were more exercised
on prison yards than sidewalks
realized I had more of a say
behind bars than free of them
no wonder why recidivism rates
are so high
we can't even get stable jobs
without disenfranchisement

being a felon
is a life sentence
regardless of
how free from penitentiary cells
we are

KICKED OUT/Taking a sick day

and the boss asks
“does anyone have anything to say regarding the
unfortunate news that is devastating our nation?”

without hesitance I make it my duty
as the only Black professional in this zoom meeting
to provide a sentimental statement
on how some Black folk may be feeling

although I am not the sole voice
for the Black and magnificent
I believe some perspective is required in this moment

and the remarks went as followed
“we are tired and exhausted
from hearing and seeing Black life
not receive any justice
ignorance is becoming more and more
detrimental to our livelihoods”

and the boss replies
“the question was in reference to the police officers
who were shot as a result of the ongoing protests”

as if the Black woman's life
who sparked the reason for them
wasn't literally snatched from its existence

my voice becoming a barrage of sarcastic assertions
“well what were the officers wearing?”
“were they looking suspicious?”
“did the residents think they didn't belong in that
neighborhood?”
“they must've looked guilty of something?”
“maybe they were about to commit a crime?”
“probably had a track record of breaking the law”

do you see it?

how ridiculous these statements are when trying to
justify the murder of someone innocent

do you see it?

how quick we are to condemn citizen behavior
but timid about criticizing the conduct of officers

do you see it?

or am I the only one who notices the racism
the dehumanization of our women
the blatant disrespect of Black bodies
are you that misinformed
or are you choosing to ignore it
like the rest of the world

Normalize

we have to normalize
criticizing our heroes
just as much as we praise them

come to the understanding
that even the people who
have improved our lives for the better
can make mistakes
that they too
have unpacking to do
that they too
have to unlearn the
socialized beliefs of their childhood
or adulthood

we have to remember
that pedestals
are built
by placing perfection
onto an elevated perception of someone
who is human
and full of flaws

Soulmate

her essence
aligned perfectly
and kindly embraced
the homely soul
that inhabited my body
a connection
of mutual understanding
moments of euphoria
transformed into authentic compassion
unconditional happiness
buried in the silence of our love

tradition is no excuse
to uphold racist ideologies
you can't justify the existence
of oppression
by ignoring it like your ancestors
you will only inherit societal problems
if you keep trying to
maintain the behavior of their mistakes

- *Revoking History*

Art

art is all about perception
and I can see that beauty exists
within your flaws
that love crafted your smile
that your character was sculpted
by the finest of parenting methods
which molded you into a masterpiece

I hope one day
you'll allow me
to show you
how I appreciate
art and its creative foundation

Dominate

there are an absurd amount of individuals
who are waiting for the second
you give up your desire to make decisions for yourself

they are waiting for the opportunity
to regulate your actions
by attempting to make you feel helpless
and dependent on their commands

they want you to believe that
they know what's best for you
and that you shouldn't question their intentions

sometimes people will try to pretend to be supportive
just so they can be dominant

it's okay to be in these streets
just don't belong to them
don't belong to anything
or anyone
that isn't
yourself

Fetish

I've developed this obsession
with getting lost in your laughter

I've become so fixated
on the awkward pitch changes
in your cackles
that I have memorized the rhythm
of your giggles

if I were asked to describe this unique noise
I could probably mimic it with exactness

these spontaneous sounds of lively amusement
have been the source of my happiness

and it remains
one of the biggest reminders
that I don't always have to take
everything in life
so serious

Reclaiming

I remember the night I lost you
emptiness occupied my body
and nothing felt right ever since
I remember how my courage hid
like it was playing childhood games again
hoping never to be found
scared that people would've realize
how unsure it really was about
everything
I remember
trying on other people's opinions
like costumes
because I felt more comfortable
with their identities
than figuring out my own
I remember the day you chose to resurface
it was like seeing a ghost resurrected

you
all grown and confident
strong and aware
nothing could stop you from being yourself

I remember the day you came back into my life
it was like something inside of me being reclaimed
it was the day I started to feel whole again

- *Reminiscing with my Voice*

#UBFamily

when you think we don't give a FUCK
about the things you're going through
or the HELL you've endured to get here
you better re-evaluate that SHIT

we care so much about your crazy ASS
that we are willing to surrender our free time
to ensure you have everything you need
to be okay

remember
real family can laugh at your mistakes
and still be by your side to help you
get through the ache

- #UBFamily
- #UBFilter

Don't try me

before approaching me
with an audacious attitude
consult with whomever
you whisper your prayers to
please rely on the teachings of
whoever you believe is listening
to the way your faith communicates
contact them in any way you need to

because I will not respond to your boldness
or disrespect with questions
I have accepted physical force
as a tool for these occasions
to be straightforward
I will throw hands
box
catch fades
engage in quarrels
exchange right hooks for uppercuts
scrap til' the break of dawn and brawl
until my point is made

I will resort to violence
to defend my people and heritage
I have no problem fighting for a purpose

so please
try your holy provider
before you attempt to try me

as Tobe Nwigwe once said:

“To the governing forces in Louisville.....y’all some
hoes.”

and it’s still

**ARREST THE KILLERS OF BREONNA
TAYLOR**

**SHE DESERVED BETTER
PLEASE REST IN HEAVEN**

Message to the white
woman who wanted to
argue about
#blacklivesmatter in
Costco

I will no longer entertain debate
about the importance of my existence

I will no longer provide specific examples
of how people who look like me
have been targeted because of their skin

I will not justify your ignorance with the
acknowledgment of your perspective

if you want to have dialogue
about the state of our nation
educate yourself first
because I will not have a conversation
about my experiences
knowing damn well
you'll never believe them

To the non-Black
people who say the N-
word/I want to say the
N-word

out of all the words
in the English language
why does this one
arouse a fascination
so strong
it becomes an obsession

you've heard
thousands of derogatory phrases
statements
and slang references
millions of times
in your lifetime
yet for some reason
this one has made its way
into your everyday vocabulary

I know it's sitting steadily on the tip of your tongue
eagerly waiting
for the day it's granted permission
to jump out of your mouth
without consequences

I know you are desperately trying
to connect to a culture that's not yours
for popularity
constantly practicing
your vernacular in isolation
to sound "cooler"
to impress ignorant fetishizers
who perpetuate
anti-blackness in all their behavior

affirming the understanding
that everyone wants to be Black
until it's time to be Black
wanting all the accolades
but none of the pain

you get so envious of the language
we've created for ourselves
that you try to integrate it in yours

you put so much effort towards
trying to be Black
that your focus
ends up forcing you
to forget where you came from

some people will be more committed
to misunderstanding your beliefs
than they are
to hearing your point of view

choosing not to engage
in this conversation
can protect you from
putting in an unnecessary amount of mental labor
into an interaction with someone
who never had intentions on seeing things
from your standpoint

Disconnect

disconnecting from people
who believe that you need
to put on a facade
in order to for them to be
content with your relationship
is self-care

don't let anyone persuade you
into feeling guilty
for severing a relationship
that was bad for your health

Change (Create Happiness And Navigate Goodness Everyday)

this one time
I was asked
if I could change anything in the world
what would it be and why

would I
turn the streets into gold
paving fortune onto city sidewalks
eliminating the disease of poverty
ridding the world of brokenness

would I
outlaw rudeness
making it illegal to lack manners
pettiness becoming irrelevant in our behavior patterns
kindness socializing us to believe
it is just as important as breathing

if I could alter anything in the world
it would be something simple
I would change the way Black women are treated

I would pump an excessive amount of appreciation
for these heavenly women into humanly bodies
fill their lungs with so much respect for these Black
angels

that you can smell the gratitude
emanating off of undeserving breaths
I'd make complimenting these queens
a common language

if I had the ability to establish
anything in this world
Black women
would be receiving
everything and anything
made of love

Courage

when I was a child
I'd watch courage the cowardly dog
to provide me with laughter
before exhaustion entered the privacy
of my late night T.V. sessions

in every episode
this timid pink canine
with paranoia problems
would find himself
facing all types of monsters
like ghoulish ghosts, serial killer barbers
alien ducks from outer space
and not to mention
vicious weremoles

which was this freaky combination
of a werewolf and ground mole

each causing panic to the young pup
but despite the alarming anxiety
coursing through his bloodstream
he somehow rallied up the nerve
to defeat these creatures
without allowing any harm to his family

now that's loyalty
being able to overcome
fears, threats or delusions
to ensure the protection
of those who are important to you

be wary of those
who promise
to give you the world
yet do nothing
but try to dictate
your place in it

To Our Future President

how you gon'
actively oppose equality
throughout your whole
political career
and feel like you can sway
Black folk to think that you will incorporate
equitable practices in your future decision making

how you gon'
support the criminalization
of all Black behavior
and think we should give you the benefit of the doubt

y'all must be out y'all's
got damn mind
to assume that Black people
are just going to be complacent
with endorsing
mediocre politicians
promising justice
when perpetuating the exact opposite

we've always seen y'all
for exactly who you've always been

hypocrites

2020 Presidential Debates

I didn't watch the 2020 presidential debates
but I'm sure it sounded like America
old white men screaming privilege
over one another
trying to convince the audience of onlookers
that they will make decisions
in the best interest of the people

I bet both made some persuasive arguments
putting on the front
that they too are disgusted with racism
with the history of colonization in our classrooms
churches
communities
language

they probably promised to give more
freedoms than they intend to
probably committed pandering to the needs of the
unheard to memory
just for a checkmark on a ballot
probably blamed each other for the state of the nation
probably didn't actually address it

but I didn't watch the presidential debates
and if you did how accurate is this

soothing break of the day
a bright wholesome sun cries
jealous of the stars

hoping that one day
people would think
that it was just as capable
of making wishes come true

Distance

you would think
that after
all this time we've spent separated
I'd find the right defense
to guard myself against your manipulative ways
but I haven't

I'm deathly afraid
that if I ever came
face to face
with your influence again
I'll be immersed
by your hold
and allow you to convince me
to believe
that every word
coming out of your mouth
contains truth

- *Letter to my insecurities*

Reasons

If you ask me
why I love you
I'd say
because the heart
pumps blood throughout the body
because lungs
provide oxygen at just the right moments
because clouds exist
because mountains are tall
because we still don't know if water is wet
and you'll probably be confused
so I'll explain it to you like this
some things that occur naturally in this world
don't have an explanation for occurring
they simply exist
but if that response
isn't adequate enough
to meet the requirements of your question
I'd say
because your smile carries encouragement
because your attitude disguises care so well
because sincerity builds comfort in your concerns
because at the end of the day
I know
whether I'm at my best
or at my worst
the love you have for me
will still be present

Occupied

sometimes being busy
isn't about
being occupied
with tasks

when your thoughts
become overwhelmingly needy
you have to give them the attention
they require to sort out your feelings
or they will consume more time
than you ever thought they could

learn how to praise people
without expecting reciprocation

you don't need to have ulterior motives
to candidly appreciate an aspect of someone's
character

an admiration of who they are as an individual
doesn't have to come with intentions

you are allowed to adore
the beauty of a person's mentality
and not have any desires
toward pursuing them

it's okay to give recognition
to people you aren't interested in

at the end of the day
everyone wants to feel noticed

Dismantle

vulnerability
can dismantle
fortified structures
of emotional suppression

you just have to be
patient enough
to find your purpose in the ruins

forgiveness
can deconstruct grudges
into pieces of healing

every part necessary
for seeing
exactly where the pain
you held
came from

Lessons from the Moon

it's okay if it takes time
for you to get comfortable
showing your whole self to people

we don't always have to
expose our vulnerabilities
just because the people who said they care about us
want to see them

it's okay to hold back sometimes
if being so open is exhausting you
you have to be protective of yourself
and still learn how to illuminate

understand
that even the moon experiences nights
where it only has the energy
to be half-full

but no matter how it feels
it still finds the time
to let the world know
it's up there in the sky
shining bright enough
for us to notice it
amongst the stars

To Black people trying to figure life out

please process whatever you're going through
before you move on from it

Things About Her

I know a girl so strong
she can deadlift the burden of unwanted attention
throws that shit over her shoulders
like nothing
and carries herself with purpose

this girl
wears her heart on her sleeve
puts her passion on display
like it's the main exhibit in her love museum
often forgetting
that men
have lost the art of appreciating
and that kind of neglect
leads to devaluing
deteriorating
a once secure sense of self-esteem

now she covers the traumatic scars
of her childhood experiences
with insecurities
losing her faith in commitment
because the idea of love she once held on a pedestal
is unstable
broken
shattered
but she is resilient

she is the epitome of apotheosis
a reflection of fantasies reincarnated

her beauty is unrivaled
nonetheless
doubt comes out of her essence
like a fragrance
and I just want her to admire the smell
of all her qualities just as I do
I could bottle that shit up and call it grateful
a scent of her existence

How Black Are You

I'm so Black that
I say nigga (N-word for you non-blacks) after almost
every statement
whether out loud or in my head
it's expressed

I'm so Black that
I speak in Ebonics
taking slang shortcuts
to communicate my thoughts

I'm so Black that
I inherently know the dance routine to the electric
slide
Cupid's shuffle
and tootsie roll
without two stepping a foot
into a dance rehearsal

I'm so Black that
I have smelled chitlins (chitterlings)
fried chicken
greens
and cornbread
with cinnamon rolls on the side
during every major Black celebration
like holidays
or days off from work

I'm so Black that
I walk with so much swagger
calm
cool
and collective
can sponsor me for a sneaker deal

I'm so Black that
occasionally
I operate on CP time (colored people time)
because I was taught
that sometimes you gotta move forward
before even deciding where you're going
and figuring out the right path
may take longer than expected
it doesn't help that there are so many things
attempting to hold you back
or get in your way

a history of racism and oppression
is an extremely difficult barrier to break
and can be a bit discouraging to navigate through
but that doesn't mean
my work ethic is unreliable
actually, it's unrivaled

I've worked 10 times as hard
to be in the position
to receive the same exposure to opportunities
that some of my non-Black counterparts
were handed

I'm so Black that when I walk into a room
full of education professionals
they assume
I'm a diversity hire
that all I can add to institutional conversations
is color and opinions on race
that my grammar is better than expected
as if
I didn't learn English in the same public-school
system as they did

I'm so Black
that my name sparks questions
of its origin
because people can't accept the things that
Black creativity has made

I'm so Black that
my identity refuses to be contained
by any American standards
that to say
it does not bow down to whiteness
it aggressively rebels
forces its recognition into every space
without approval

I'M so Black
I'M SO Black
I'M SO BLACK

that with every action I take
I know the world is watching

America the Hypocritical

you encourage the people
to speak their minds
in the name of protecting their rights

you tell them to let their voices be heard
but you are the one silencing them

you claim circumstantial immunity
when asked
why you don't follow your own constitution

breaking the laws you've created
to enforce ones that don't exist yet
stating your acting within the best interest
of your citizens
protecting your status
as the number one country
to those who benefit

while everyone else
is busy asking for directions
to the place where freedom is
and you have the nerve to say
right here
in the home of the brave
without telling them
they are going to need
more than courage
to survive here

love is an unrelenting
unstoppable
unbreakable
force of compassion
that is underestimated
by those who have never had
the opportunity to witness its strength

Connections

I never thought connection
would feel like this
a link of emotion
tied to another person
for the sake of togetherness

I never thought attachment
would have me feeling so desperate
each moment
I'm away from my personal associations
creates a bond
based in a fear of abandonment

I've never been so vulnerable
and so anxious
but riddled with so much excitement
I have a devotion
to these interactions

I'm eager to see where they take me

tell me
how a man
should love you
and I'll interpret
those words into understanding

I'll transform them into
consistent action

whether you roll with the punches
or duck the consequences of your mistakes
learn how to shake off the negativity
and enjoy life

- *Only if things were that simple*

Overcoming Myself

how can I put aside these anxieties
how can I silence the doubts
that have been screaming at my thoughts

they've been bickering
back and forth
never coming to an understanding
at the rate that they are going
I don't think they ever will

my self-esteem
is extremely concerned
with the pressures of always having to be
overly alert of the consequences
my silence generates

lately
they have been comparing themselves to others
unsatisfied with their appearance
demanding recognition in spaces
that make my shyness uncomfortable
it's not ready for that kind of attention

I try to give constructive feedback
but my ego takes it personal
I ask them not to be defensive
and that was like requesting conflict

despite my attempts at de-escalating the situation
matters only seem to get worse

add that to
the financial burdens
relationship issues
and fluctuations in my mood
equals one colossal problem
of getting in my own way

even with all of this chaos
I still manage to dream
of a future with independence

after I learn
how stand up to my inner voices
I'll be able to hear the gracious sounds
of affirmation

when I gain the strength
to lug around this baggage
without shame
I'll be able to come to terms
with the regrets that follow me

I know I have to realize
that avoiding the difficulties life presents
won't excuse me from making mistakes

once I stop
tripping over my own mental blocks
I'll be able to run
toward everything my heart
knows it deserves

you were my backbone
I relied on you
every time
the world got confusing
or difficult
I hoped
you'd always be my scapegoat
someone to place blame
when I was at fault
for exploring the curiosity
of my childish ways
I knew
eventually
I'd outgrow you
I just wish
it wasn't so soon

- *To Innocence, my best friend*

I got questions

when a Black man is murdered by a cop
do police stations
view them as indications that a holiday is being
recognized
festivities to justify
why no work is being done
to bring justice to the situation

when a Black woman is assassinated in her own home
why do criminal investigations label them
as unfortunate
as accidents
as results of misinformation
calling them everything except for
what they are
HITS
premeditated targeting with the intention to kill

when a Black person does anything other than
breathing
why is it seen as a threat

what about us living makes you feel so unsafe

To the person who
asked me to stop
talking about racism so
much in my poems

how are you more upset
at conversations about racism
than actual acts of racism

that's like being angrier
at the person
who thought about beating yo' ass
than the person who actually did it

that's like being mad
at the ocean
for the trash floating within its waters
as if they are responsible

in other words
your priorities are a little
fucked up

and if that doesn't encourage you
to rethink where you place your attention
I suggest you look into other artistic outlets
because in MY poems
I will not be silent

I used to try to remedy the pain
from disloyal friendships
with tears
because crying is cathartic and at times
therapeutic

then I had a breakthrough
and realized laughter suits these situations better
because life has a funny way of showing you
that some people who you chose to invite to the
celebration of all your successes

will be the same people who hoped
that you didn't actually attain them

In the good ole days

I watched you smile when I came into the room
I watched you laugh at my awkwardness
I watched you engulf happiness
until you were bursting with delight

the side effects from being together

I saw gentleness in your tears
I saw humanity in your anger
there were even moments
where I saw a stable future with you
in our arguments

back in those times
there was nothing that could convince me
that you would ever find contentment
with someone else

but I was wrong

because now
I watch you smile to a presence that isn't mine
I see you enjoying someone else's love
and it dawns on me
we aren't in the good ole days anymore

Allegory of A Woman

broadcasted over the clouds of awe and admiration is
an undeniable truth
human perfection can be observed
through wandering eyes
conversation surrounding the topic
have been the cause of debate
over thousands of decades
as many believe this idea is preposterous
but it's still about perception
it's about who is observing the object
in question
it's about who is perceiving the qualities
and labeling them as flawless
it's about someone transforming their sight into
focused, methodical, open-minded spectacles
capable of observing godly qualities in a human form
if people can't fathom the concept mentally
it probably will fail to be shown
in their vision

you're carrying all these concerns
and it's making you feel
like waking up the next morning
is going to be a hassle
you may even hope that your brain
hits the snooze button on your heartbeat

you see the route that you have chosen
is taking longer than desired
to get to your destination

you believe
your courage and purpose
have went on separate paths
getting lost from each other
and now you don't know where to go

just keep
easing down the road
and you will notice
that happiness isn't found at a location
when you insert it
in your footsteps

Catcallin'

you think your street harassment
is appealing

that your provocative gestures of unwanted flirtation
are going to win female attention without discomfort

you seriously expect
her to fall at your feet
because you compared her physique
to some playboy bunny

compared her skin to dessert

you wolves are always trying to make a meal out of
feminine bodies
howling at every opportunity
that passes you by

newsflash
women hate catcalling
and you getting upset at her rejection
is male entitlement feeling obligated
to call for the silence of female independence

- *your privilege is showing, and it's disgusting*

Slang Dictionary: Shole

Shole (adj) \ 'shōl \: a degree of certainty marked by an amount of satisfaction in the action; often followed by a request to do something about it

also referred to as: shall

synonyms: sure, sho'

ex: I shole did eat the last piece of pizza, and what?

Neutrality

neutrality is a dangerous reaction
to decisions about
responding to injustices
especially when they become questions
and human rights
shouldn't have to be a political platform
in order for people to recognize them

Still Missing You

at night
when I'm supposed
to be counting sheep
I'm awake
counting down the days
until I get to see you again

Love with an Open Bar

I walked carelessly
into a bar
when a swift aroma of arousal
overtook my body
drawing me to the face of a man
whose presence
brought my sexuality to its knees

I saw the dim light in the room
bounce off his glasses
as he gazed in my direction
a look that could make pleasure tremble in excitement

my desires whispered statements of persuasion
in my ear
hoping to coerce my confidence to be fearless
and approach this magnificent example of walking
temptation
but I couldn't

because nervousness clung onto my self-
consciousness
promising to never leave its side
even brought anxiety along for extra support

so I just sat there
and observed in wonder
daydreaming of potential love
wishing we would leave this place together

you call yourself broken because you haven't healed
from things that hurt you

I call you resilient because you have learned to leave
the things that have made a habit out of being
content with asking for forgiveness instead of
preventing themselves from causing you pain

everything in life can be seen from multiple
perspectives

Meals

they say
breakfast is the most important meal of the day
in fact
eating a 9:00 am bowl of self-esteem has long term
health benefits
it can reduce obesity
high blood pressure
diabetes
and can even cure the worst cases of negative
thinking

for my meals
I like an ounce of confidence
sprinkled with a little bit of happiness
I'm also a sucker for a good steak sandwich

I've never been to coo coo for coco puffs
the round chocolate balls never seemed to provide me
much sustenance
or maybe
the small orbs of corn covered in cocoa
is too reminiscent of my childhood
empty promises of satisfaction being spoon fed into
my innocence

needless to say
I don't skip fueling my body with the necessary
energy to avoid feeling unhealthy

Flowers

everyone loves flowers when they first start to bloom
everything about them seems exceptionally
remarkable
until you observe that one flower
that tries to lure you in
just to catch you in its trap

sometimes
people will sacrifice being around others
to make sure their flower
has the necessary attention it requires
others suck at keeping them alive
we need to be mindful
that some people want to have them
just to pluck the pedestals
without valuing the roots that caused its growth

many get so attached to these plants
that they continue to keep them nearby even when
they are dead
continue watering them as if they are going to grow
hoping that the effort they put in will bring them back
to life
knowing damn well they need to stop
but have committed taking care of them to routine

and I understand this thought process thoroughly
I used to believe that I could not live without a flower
to call my own
that breathing would be difficult

if I never found the right flower to provide me with
oxygen
or purpose
I've watched so many flowers go from daylight
radiant
to nighttime withered
due to under-appreciation

there are lessons within the pollen (consequences)

flowers are delicate
they need to be treated with lots of love
and affection
they need to be talked about positively
or given with intentionality

flowers will give you just as much happiness
as you put into them

* for the duration of this poem
I replaced the word relationship
with flower (or reference to plants)

*read it again replacing flower with relationship

A place that condones racism
and fails to condemn racists
will always see violence
as an acceptable option
to restrain outside opinions
that seem like disobedience

Haiku About Being Black in America

the world mistreats you
blames you for breathing too hard
stares while you suffer

Haiku About Being Black in America Part. 2

your joy is envied
your laughter causes healing
but seen as a threat

revenge
rarely heals what hurts
without causing new wounds

in life
you will enter so many spaces
where the energy introduced in the room
will be unfamiliar and unpredictable
you won't have many options
in responding to the unusual aura
but in every environment
remember to
protect your spirit

Memory Lane

I've had
too many trips down memory lane
where my experiences
were supposed to be
vacations for my mind to wander
instead
they turned into nightmares
where I was held captive
by my traumas
with no place to run
no hero to rescue me
just my thoughts and I
tied together
looking for an escape
trying not to panic
hoping we'll be able
to find a way back home

one day
I hope
my poems
will stop
being about you

Family Reunion

there may be a day
where we get see each other again
and if that's the case
I'd like to say
3 things before you return to
your heavenly retreat with Jesus

1. I miss the way you said my name
it always sounded like you skipped
the vowels and syllables but I knew it was just your
way of getting my attention

2. I miss the faces you'd make
after hearing me complain
about the smell of cigarettes in the house
you'd smirk and shrug at your hearts content

3. I miss being able to see you from the safety of my
bedroom
your presence lingers in every room I enter

and when you get back to God's Temple
tell him
that I'm looking forward to the day
where you get to introduce me

To Hood Niggas

my niggas!
I see you holdin' down the block
trying to make a name for yourself in these streets
remember
at times it can get dangerous
so, watch yourself out there
you know these villains of criminal justice
are looking to turn Black boys
into evil plots of land
covered in tombstones
they've made
too many Black women damsels in disappearance
we've all heard of hood heroes
slain in broad daylight
by police henchmen
leaving heroines alone to fight back
the tears of missing loved ones
be aware
these scoundrels are trying to convince the world
that they are the victims
understand
that police bullets
don't care
whether your courageous or fearful
they are simply out to kill you

to every Black person searching for validation of their
uniqueness in the irregularity of uncharted comforts

hopefully you grasp the understanding that your
Blackness is not a monolith

we hold a multitude of behavior, beliefs and
characteristics

many that deviate from the standard of Black
stereotypes

we are a microcosm of Black brilliance
living in a society
that forces us to choose between racist archetypes
in order to ease white anxiety over Black everything

remember

we each make up the particles
of Black magic

Acknowledgements

I want to acknowledge everyone who has been or is currently in my life.

I love you.

I appreciate everyone who provoked, influenced or inspired these poems. That includes you too, Dawn.

About the Author



Jakeel R. Harris is an educator, speaker, organizer, and spoken word poet that tackles topics of social justice, cultural awareness, leadership, and self-awareness. His activism includes a strong focus on promoting and encouraging pro-Blackness,

engaging in community restoration, and providing equitable resources to disadvantaged communities. He holds a Master of Science degree in Counseling with an emphasis on Student Development in Higher Education from California State University, Long Beach, as well as a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from Humboldt State University.

Jakeel performs and writes spoken word poetry under the pseudonym SPEAKS, covering topics of race and identity, while using his life experiences as a platform to discuss important issues that plague our society.

SPEAKS is an acronym for Spreads Positivity Encourage Awareness Know Something, which is not only his stage name but also the non-profit organization and movement he has founded.

www.jakeelrharris.com