



ISSUE 003

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# *3. All Black Voices Matter*

COMMON SENSE

@AFROSCOPE- MULTIMEDIA ARTIST FROM GHANA EXPLORING ALTERNATE AFRIKAN REALITIES THROUGH ART & DESIGN. HERE ARE SOME MOMENTS FROM MY JOURNEY

# CONTENTS

**3** Editor's Note

**5** A letter to my younger self -  
Lord Michael Hastings

**8** A case against black lives  
matter

**12** Interview with Ikenna Nebo,  
Founder of You Can Too Program

**18** A letter to my younger self -  
kevin Osborne, CEO MeWe360

**21** Inclusivity Within the Black  
Community

**24** BLACK Lives matter, we  
agree

**26** letter to my younger self -  
Aramide Yusuff

**31** Advice





EDITOR'S  
NOTE

@MIKEOMONIYI

# MIKE OMONIYI

**ABOVE**

Image from Slater Menswear  
Campaign

This year has been difficult for many groups, especially people of colour when global protests erupted over George Floyd's death in America, Black people looked at their screens and knew that it would have real world ramifications, especially at work. Already dealing with the mental trauma from COVID-19, the worldwide exposure of racism has had a particular sting. Not only did it remind us of the broken system we live in, it reminded Black people up and down the country about their wounds. Many young Black males could empathise with police brutality and excessive police force. Hate crime rates have more than doubled since 2013. Stop-and-search became more common against all ethnic minority groups apart from white and Chinese people between 2014 and 2019, and Black individuals are almost ten times more likely to be searched than white individuals. This is the country where, in the last 10 years, the Windrush scandal, the Grenfell fire have created hostile environments. They are symptoms of a very deep-set racism.

As well as these fresh reminders, witnessing the heart wrenching images of the final moments of George Floyd's life has led to an endless number of conversations, panel discussions, meetings, surveys, one-to-one chats, webinars, texts exchanges, interviews, workshops, blogs and social media postings. Front and centre in all of these discussions are Black employees who are called on by their bosses to be the spokespeople for the black plight and struggle. Many have had to talk about their personal experiences, explain the differences between Black Lives Matter and All Lives Matter, break down microaggressions, ally-ship, all this whilst staying professional and working hard to not be perceived as a 'moaner' or a 'bad sport.' This creates another layer of trauma and fatigue for Black professionals. Some bosses may be well meaning however, Black people are tired.

Here's The Detail



NO MATTER HOW BIG A NATION IS, IT IS NO STRONGER THAN ITS WEAKEST PEOPLE, AND AS LONG AS YOU KEEP A PERSON DOWN, SOME PART OF YOU HAS TO BE DOWN THERE TO HOLD HIM DOWN, SO IT MEANS YOU CANNOT SOAR AS YOU MIGHT OTHERWISE.

*~ Marian Anderson*

# A letter to my younger self

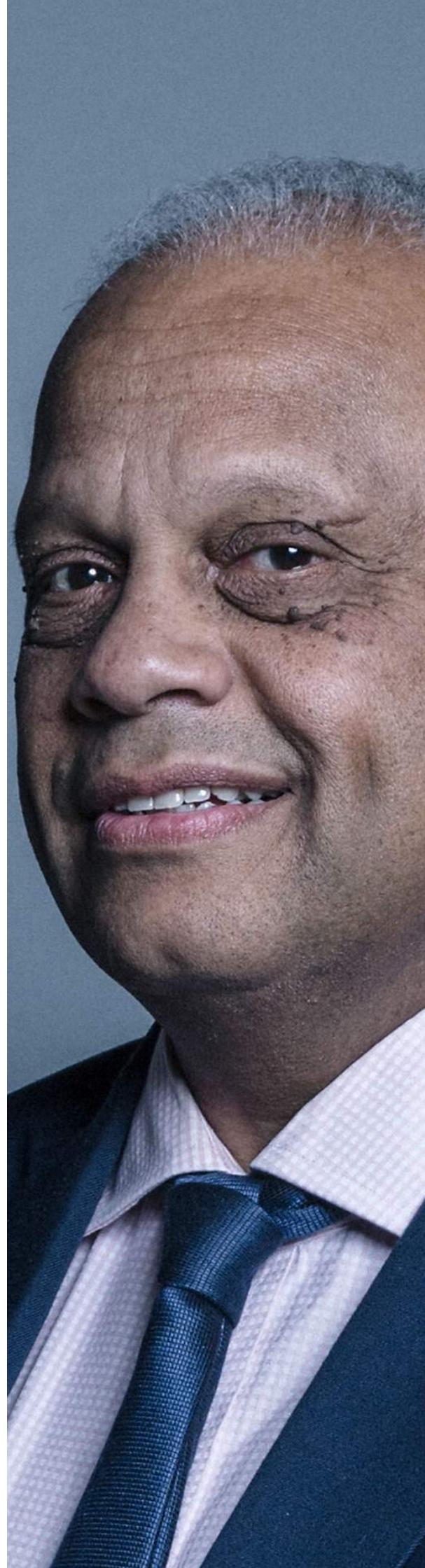
Lord Michael Hastings CBE

How quickly life changes especially when we least expect it. I once thought the world was a wide open place and that globalisation was to be seen and enjoyed. Now, with hindsight, I want to warn you not to be blindsided by progress. After all, isn't progress all about technology, travel, opportunity and the prospect of glowing freedom and potential wealth forever, before our starry eyes? Well, if 2020 was a year to look forward to, it is certainly not a year to forget. In these months when all that progress was promised, instead we saw the crushing effects of fear, fury, failure and fundamental dysfunction.

*"I am not troubled by turbulence. I am guided through the fog by the bright and brilliant light of compassionate, generous, feet-washing, life-sharing, loving people. That's how we build again"*

Life was again in short supply. It was for so many of us still being targets of violence and even death by existence, because to so many, black lives still don't matter. And as for that travel and freedom, no, the word is in lockdown. We lived a year as though we had just days to fear. Where hope once filled every space, we found the reality of winter closing within our minds as it did to our outsides. I remain forever optimistic. We've been here before and lived and we've come through to fight another day for generosity, dignity, purpose and peace. I am not troubled by turbulence. I am guided through the fog by the bright and brilliant light of compassionate, generous, feet-washing, life-sharing, loving people. That's how we build again.

*Lord Hastings CBE is the former Global Head of Corporate Citizenship for KPMG International. He was previously the BBC's Head of Public Affairs and then the first Head of Corporate Responsibility. He is the second Chancellor of Regent's University London.*



A grayscale portrait of a man with a short beard and mustache, wearing a checkered shirt, looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The image is split horizontally, with the top half showing the upper part of his face and the bottom half showing the lower part, creating a double-exposure effect.

# COMMON SENSE SPOTLIGHT

**MUBARAK TAIRU**

Editor | EDITOR'S DESK





# A case against Black Lives Matter

BY AARON FENTON-HEWITT

“THE OPPRESSED, INSTEAD OF STRIVING FOR LIBERATION, TEND THEMSELVES TO BECOME OPPRESSORS” - PAULO FREIRE, PHILOSOPHER

There is a difference between supporting an organization and supporting a cause. Make no mistake about it; racism is real. It is a very real thing and it's abhorrent. History has shown the worst of what humanity has to offer. From the trans-Atlantic slave trade to the civil rights era in the United States, it is clear that hatred for another human being purely due to skin colour and prejudiced ideas is wrong and often leads to disaster. It is a disgusting practice. We are fortunate to live in a society where racism is not tolerated. Of course, there is always room for improvement and certain laws could use reformation, but the average person detests racism. There are instances, however, where movements and organisations use legitimate grievances as 'Trojan Horses' to further their own agendas, often to the point where it undermines the original purpose. In the age of social media, it has become easier than ever for a movement to be polluted by other factors, which in turn will shape the views of the public. Black Lives Matter (BLM) is no exception; therefore, I'd like to submit to you two main reasons as to why you should take a step back from it.

One reason is that BLM does not purely stand for racial equality. There are other philosophies that they condone which might surprise you. An example of this was the fact that they wished to “dismantle the nuclear family” (quietly removed from their website a few weeks ago). The nuclear family is a very important aspect of human life. Research shows that there are direct links between single parent households (of which black people disproportionately represent 37%) and poverty, and that children who have their father in their life are several times less likely to be involved in gangs, drugs, violence and criminal activity. Given the fact that the movement is called ‘Black Lives Matter’, how can they support this? There’s also the religious side of the matter, which is surprisingly relevant. 69% of Black Britons are Christian, and 15% are Muslim. Both faiths support the idea of a mother and a father. Can you now, in good faith, continue to support BLM?

The other reason is to encourage you to think independently, without jumping on the bandwagon. Movements such as this often have a way of monopolising the way society views a subject. Due to ‘cancel culture’, people are scared of being accused of being racist, to the point where it almost seems as if they’re pandering to black people. Their motivations for treating us with respect changes, which is wrong and insincere. However, it is entirely possible to view the subject of racism through a non-BLM lens; the movement does not – and more importantly should not – have a monopoly on the way people view racism. We are not slaves or subservient to it; rather, we are individuals with our own experiences and perspective, capable of reason and logic. There is no need to follow the crowd. Think for yourself. Research. Have conversations with people. Take your own experience of life into consideration. Do not give people brownie points for treating you as a human being. Be part of a higher standard.



“

**KRASODOMSKI-  
JONES:**

**THE ABILITY TO PROCESS A  
DIVERSE RANGE OF OPINION  
AND, ABOVE ALL, AN  
ACCEPTANCE OF SOME KIND OF  
SHARED REALITY AND TRUTH  
ARE CENTRAL TO A  
FUNCTIONING DEMOCRACY**

*Alex Krasodomski-Jones writing on the Demos website.*

”



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THERE ARE TWO SIDES  
TO EVERY STORY.



# Interview with Ikenna Nebo, Founder of You Can Too Program

BY M.T. OMONIYI

*You Can Too is a completely free volunteer mentorship program dedicated to uplifting and inspiring minority youth. We sat down with Founder Ikenna Nebo a rising third-year student at Columbia University.*

## **What is your name and what do you do?**

My name is Ikenna David Nebo, I'm 19 years old, and I'm the CEO and Founder of the You Can Too Program, a program that I created in response to the lack of support, space, and structure that is available to Black and Brown youth in the United States. You Can Too is a mentorship program that pairs Black, Brown, and Latinx high school students to Collegiate Mentors who are also Black, Brown and/or Latinx. Our mentors not only walk their mentees through high school and college prep but also equip them with important knowledge about society, Black and Brown history, and politics.

## **What's it like being Black in America in 2020?**

This may sound controversial, but I do not believe being Black in America in 2020 is any different from being an American Black in any other year.

We are as dehumanized and disrespected as we have always been. Did police brutality begin in 2020? Did health care disparities begin in 2020? Or the educational disparities? No, the atrocities we are experiencing presently are more or less the same atrocities we've been subjected to historically. The thing is, now that the indulgences and pleasantries that normally disguise America's dark underbelly have been suspended due to COVID-19, the country is forced to sit and confront itself, bare and unfiltered

## **Where did the You Can Too Program begin?.**

Though founded in 2019, the seed for You Can Too was planted during the fall of 2017, the beginning of my senior year of high school. I began volunteering at a middle school in Harlem as a tutor and teachers aide, once a week for two and a half hours.

During this time, I not only had the opportunity to be an academic resource to the students I tutored, but also connect with them on a deeper personal level through sporadic conversations about race and society. After all, I wasn't that much older than these kids, so they saw me not as an authority figure but as a friend and confidant. They picked my brain all the time, asking me to help them understand the world they were forced to navigate but had no guide to. Why did they get suspicious looks from police officers? Why did their neighborhoods seem to lack basic resources but, not too far away from them smack in the middle of Harlem, was Columbia University and Morningside Heights, teeming with opportunity and resources. Granted, I was still in high school, I definitely had a lot more perspective than they did, and was aware of the forces that create this inequality our communities must face. As I shared my knowledge with them I noticed a powerful change in the students I worked with, not only in their academic performance, but in their demeanor and drive.

Not only were they determined to overcome the challenges I described to them, they wanted to be leaders and changemakers as well. By the time I graduated high school, I was determined to continue doing what I could to foster the next generation of leaders, equipped with the knowledge to overcome the challenges of school but also the challenges of life. A year into my time at Columbia, I established You Can Too, piloting the program at the very school I volunteered at in high school, the rest is history

### **What are some of the challenges you've faced?**

Personally, I believe sometimes I might be a bit hard on myself: there's so much I want to do and accomplish, and in the moments that I might fall a bit short, I sometimes struggle with that. I am working on that mentality though and I have seen tremendous progress. Professionally, with You Can Too, securing funding is something we've had issues with, especially through COVID. People are, understandably, more frugal with their money and it has been hard to get through to folks. However, our kids rely on us to provide them the resources and support we promised them so we will continue to knock down doors, send emails, and do what we can to keep on growing and thriving.



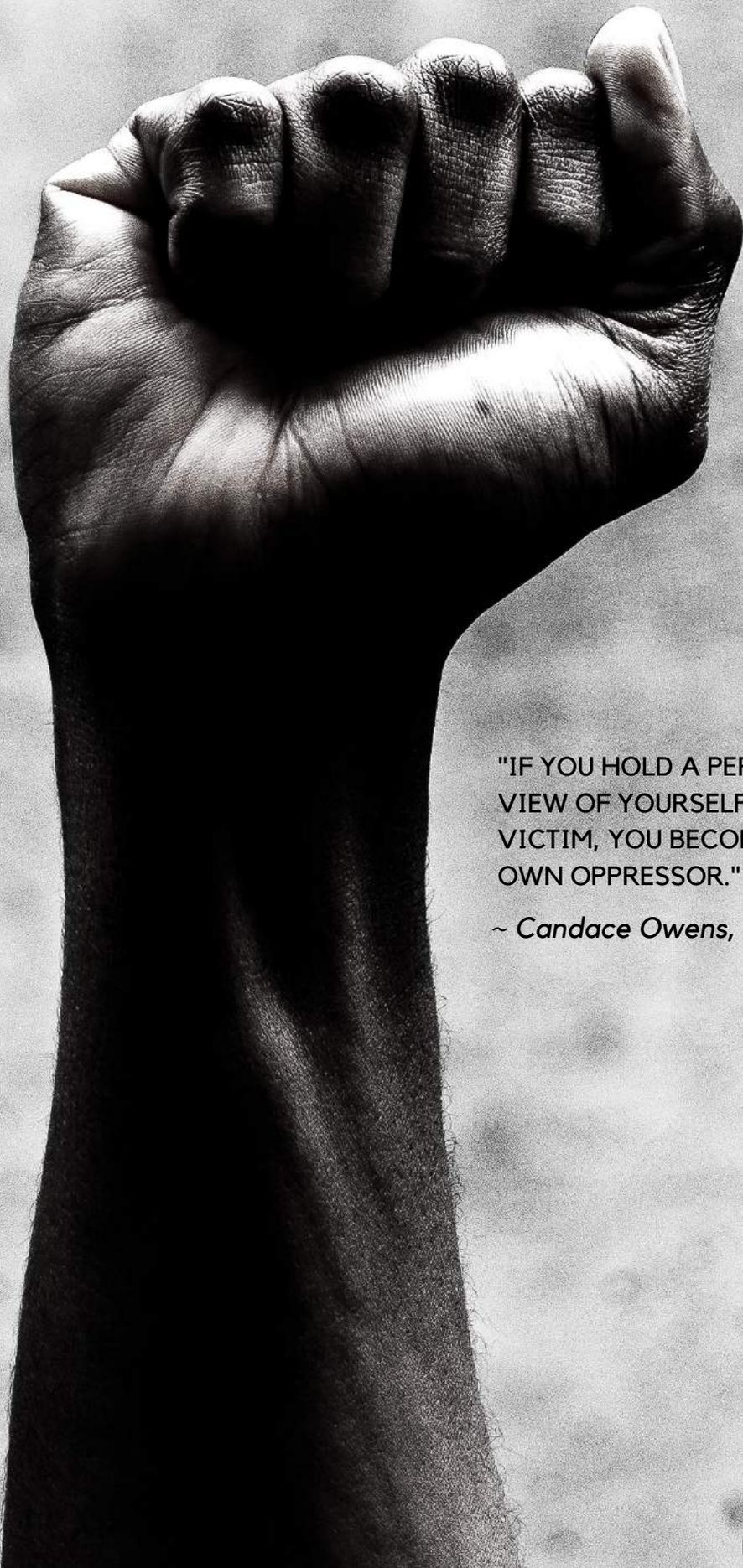


## **Why are young Black boys and girls so important to you?**

Black and Brown boys and girls mean the world to me because I see myself in every Black and Brown child, especially those that come through our program. I understand the excitement a Black child feels when they meet and connect with another Black child. I have experienced the pride a Black child feels when their history is celebrated, and their culture uplifted. I understand the joy a Black child feels when their blackness is affirmed and celebrated and not used as a tool to criminalize and corrupt them. Most importantly I understand the rush a Black child feels when they are loved, genuinely loved. Not loved for what they can offer, but loved because they exist, and their existence is a blessing. I am not where I am today without the people who helped me feel all of these things, and believe in myself; therefore I am determined to make sure that I can create as many spaces and opportunities for young minority children especially Black and Brown children to feel this empowerment. Without these experiences, it is extremely difficult for Black children to see their full potential, given the obstacles society has placed before them.

## **What brings you hope?**

The youth brings me hope. I know I technically count as “the youth” and in a sense people my age do fill me with tremendous pride and hope. However, when I talk of the youth, I speak of kids even younger than myself. Through my work at You Can Too, I have had the privilege to work with some tremendous students, who exhibit a social awareness and drive that I certainly did not have at their age. Some students in my program have been leading their own speaker series called Unite Ignite Empower (@uie.active), during which they have been creating spaces where they can organize and educate their peers. It seems like the young ones have been forced to grow up quickly given everything they’ve had to witness in the last couple years. However, they have refused to be overwhelmed and rather have taken the initiative to combat their circumstances and create a brighter future for themselves. Because of them, I believe that soon, we will be in a far better place.



"IF YOU HOLD A PERMANENT  
VIEW OF YOURSELF AS A  
VICTIM, YOU BECOME YOUR  
OWN OPPRESSOR."

~ *Candace Owens,*



# COMMON SENSE SPOTLIGHT

**JUNIOR USINA**  
Lead | Business Development



# A letter to my younger self

Kevin Osborne, CEO MeWe360



Dear 16 year old Kevin,

It saddens me to think of you with the anxiety of any 16 year old trying to find themselves, made a thousand times harder because who you are has been shaped by racism. It has become part of you. It runs so deep that you will learn to split your personality to fit in, be normal, be acceptable, be white. I wish I could tell you that racism, the unpicking of it and putting yourself back together, understanding it and healing from it, will be painful but ultimately rewarding work. Work that you will come to love.

I wish I could tell you that dyslexia doesn't make you stupid and that your mediocre exam results won't matter. That much of what you were taught was perception, not truth.

That you weren't taught much of what you needed to know to face the world with genuine confidence, and that 'front' you showed was not of your making. I wish I could tell you that being all of yourself is okay, that being black is okay, really okay. Not just because you've heard it said and because you were told that's how you should feel. But because you understood the truth of it and the truth in it: that we are all the same. That we are all human, even though sometimes we can be inhumane. That it all turns out okay and that I wouldn't have done it any differently. I wish I could tell you that you are ready for it all and that most of the battle for happiness and contentment is learning to love yourself and trusting your instincts.

Trite as it sounds, it's true. I know, from watching *Back to the Future*, that tampering with my past would risk changing the present. So, I wouldn't tell you any of this for fear of it taking you down a different path. But I do wish that somehow I could be there to ease the pain, just a little. Without you, there would be no me. Thank you for your resilience, for being a dreamer, for staying optimistic and for believing the world might be better one day, even though you didn't know when and how. This resilience and dreaming have stayed with me. So, thank you. Keep dreaming.

*Kevin Osborne has spent the last 30 years as leader, producer and developer in the arts and creative industries supporting BAME talent.*

*He founded MeWe360, a social enterprise established in 2012 to support BAME entrepreneurial talent in reaching its full potential and to promote a more equitable and representative sector.*



**WE HELP OPPOSITE SIDES TALK  
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EACH OTHER**

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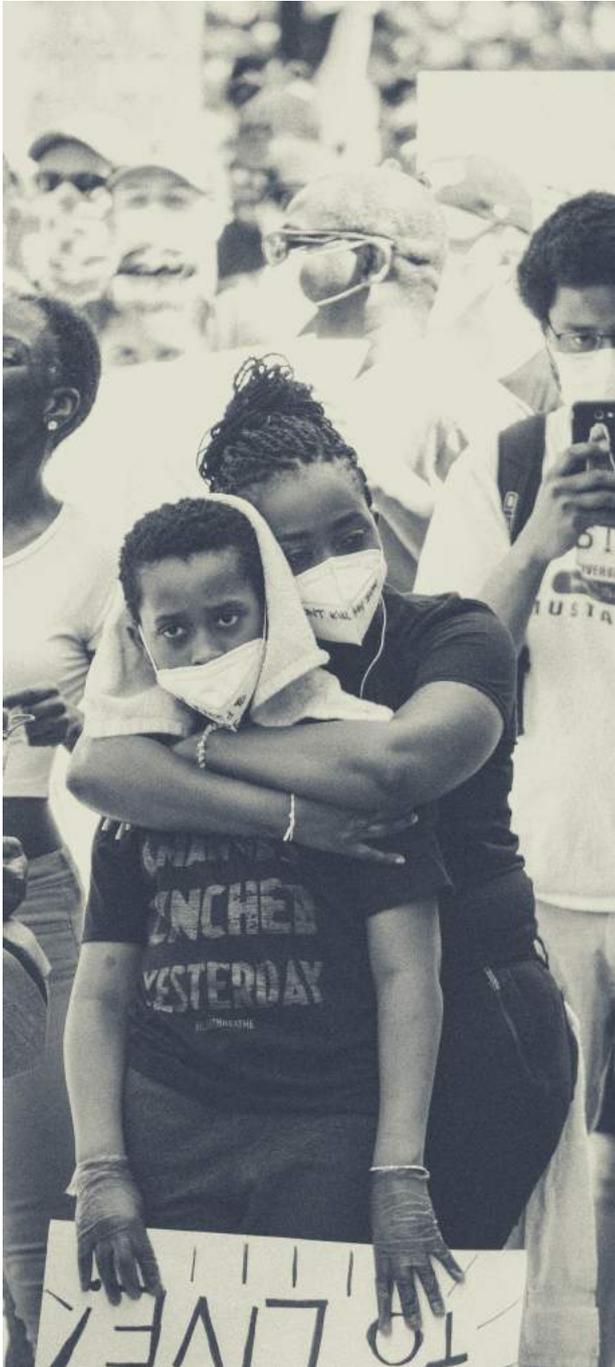
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*Alex Krasodonski-Jones writing on the Demos website.*

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# Inclusivity Within the Black Community

*CheVaughn Starling*

Inclusivity is a word that means bringing everybody together. While Black Lives Matter is a small fraction of trying to solve the bigger piece of systematic racism, it is a statement that means that Black lives really do and should matter in a world where Black lives do not really matter to some. Nevertheless, Black lives need to be important to Black people. Amid social and racial injustice, the Black community must look into certain issues that could be beneficial to the holistic picture of the fight against social and racial injustice.

## **Colorism**

It is no surprise that some prejudices within the Black community begins with slavery. During slavery, slave owners split the slaves into groups based off skin color. Slaves with lighter skin colors were assigned with domestic tasks and darker skin were mandated to work in the field. Thus the terminology “House Negro, Field Negro”. To go further the ‘paper bag test’ was often used in Black spaces and when it came to hiring Black people. If someone were the same color as the paper bag or lighter, they would be allowed in the space and considered for hire. If they were darker than the paper bag, they would not.



## Homosexuality

Colorism is not the only thing plaguing the Black community. Aggression against homosexuality within the race has been a problem as well. In recent years, same sex relationships have become socially acceptable.

Colorism is not the only thing plaguing the Black community. Aggression against homosexuality within the race has been a problem as well. In recent years, same sex relationships have become socially acceptable. However, negative attitudes toward homosexuality are higher amongst Black populations than White populations due to the religious and political forces of Black culture. Some may argue that the history of slavery may have led to distorted views on Black sexuality. One of the ways that slave owners used to make an example of slaves was 'Buck Breaking'. This form of abuse was popular during the increase of rebellions. It involved White supremacist and/or slave owners rap



**COMMON SENSE  
SPOTLIGHT**

**CHEVAUGHN STARLING**

Journalist | American Reporter

# BLACK LIVES MATTER, WE AGREE

BY SHAUN FLORES

“Every good cause begins as a movement, becomes a business and eventually degenerates into a racket”

- Eric Hoffer

Black Lives matter, we all agree. As morals, ethics and values have shifted towards tolerance over the past couple years towards a fairer, inclusive and more equitable society, this is the common consensus. Lest we forget that equality of opportunity does not immediately mean equality of outcomes.

Black Lives Matter (the movement) shook the world and rattled the cradle of society. They called for greater depth and breadth and challenged history. Perhaps so much so Black History Month feels like a tsunami of blackness on top of the past couple months of protests alongside the ever-present fear and threat of Covid. Covid and Racism have something diabolically in common. They are the anchors upon which our society is gripped, and Black Lives Matter challenges this.

Seemingly when we think of Black Lives Matter, white people come to mind; the staunch advocates of racism, and proud anti-racists. However, some are more racist because they have a monolithic, pack mindset, due to narratives pushed by the mainstream media. Some black people have a solitary mindset where we think for ourselves and are not locked into the dominant thought patterns. We do not all agree with hypersexualised, misogynistic, materialistic rap music. Our blackness is called into question when we are against the mainstream norms of what it means to be black.

Many white people would deem us as “coons, Uncle Toms”, or even “sellouts” which is racist in itself; because it assumes my thought patterns based on the colour of my skin, therefore forgetting I am an individual, not part of a pack. Aspects of Black Lives Matter accentuates a cacophony of tribalism that is dividing society for the wrong reasons. To be divided against racism is normal, but to alienate the very people you purport to support is cutting your nose off to spite your face.

Whether white, black, brown, gay, straight, trans or whatever you fall under in this political minefield of identity, supporting the Black Lives Matter movement is very different from the concept. Black people in all our beautiful variety see the support of our communities in different facets, not one linear tunnel vision.

Fatherhood is the missing link and yet is the proverbial elephant in the room. Black children need their biological fathers in their lives. Research has statistically proven children and elephants fare better with fathers in their lives. Black Lives Matter does not advocate this but rather focuses on things which are just as important. Once upon a time black homes were the most important thing, now they are reduced to insignificant pit stops for children. Children need fathers.



For me to fully support Black Lives Matter, bringing the father back into the home is pivotal. Maybe it's the disposable attitude we have towards fathers? You have one mother, but it seems you can have many fathers? Fathers are EQUALLY important

Upon further dissection Black Lives Matter can be best characterised as a wildfire, burning down everything in its wake and destroying the good with the bad. We need a carefully layered dissection of the movement. In August 2020, Black Lives Matter UK received £1.17 million in donations to the GoFundMe crowdfunding campaign. Who is the leader for Black Lives Matter? Who manages the money?

It is a concept which means the money is not necessarily traceable and the spending is not transparent. Black Lives Matter the movement is a racket that has descended into anarchism, riots and violence under the name of "Black Lives Matter". Anarchists within it have capitalised upon black emotions, diverting away from black issues that have plagued us as a community. Separate the concept from the movement then tell me which one you agree with.



**“A child not embraced by its village will burn it down to feel its warmth.”**

**(AFRICAN PROVERB)**



# LETTER TO MY YOUNGER SELF

BY ARAMIDE YUSUFF

*Being alone won't bring you to tears again, you'll come to love it. Your company is lit, you'll respect silence, peace and quiet and you'll chase after those still moments. You'll come to cherish the times you can be alone with yourself and wonder why you didn't converse with you more often*



To my younger me, you knew very little, about how the world worked, and it seems like everything always happened to you. You seemed to have so little control and yet you persevered, and you pushed through. You couldn't stop, you kept swimming through the torrents. Truly you were a struggler from birth.

If I could go back in time, I'd tell you that you are loved, and you are necessary. We didn't hear that word often - love. It seemed to only exist in realms that you simply did not exist in. Reserved for people who didn't look like you. And when you first hear that God loves you, it will leave a bitter taste in your mouth. Because it seems absurd, almost unreal. The truth can be hard to swallow. Don't worry baby girl, this love doesn't leave

If I could visit you, I would keep you company on those lonely days. You've had a lot of tear-soaked pillows and wondered why the night seemed so dark. I can't say the crying will stop, you're a crier by nature but now I know it's okay for Black girls to cry. You don't have to be the 'strong black woman', a trope that affords no agency for emotions. You are a complex being, so don't be ashamed of the tears - they mean something.

Being alone won't bring you to tears again, you'll come to love it. Your company is lit, you'll respect silence, peace and quiet and you'll chase after those still moments. You'll come to cherish the times you can be alone with yourself and wonder why you didn't converse with you more often.

If I could speak with you, I'll tell you validation is a drug. Your name is not hard to pronounce, so reject every crude amalgamation and correct them. Your hair doesn't need to be relaxed and it can flourish if you just let it be. You won't pass A-levels Physics, but that won't determine your life trajectory. You're not weird for reading manga and watching anime, you'll meet others that love it too. Those daily pangs of fear you experience is called anxiety and one day you will overcome it. You will make mistakes, but you will learn and even a little growth is commendable. You are fearfully and wonderfully made, and nothing can take that away.

There is so much I would say if I could go back in time. I would love on you so hard, Aramide. But I can't go back in time, so I will spend each day reminding you that you are so loved, you are seen, and you are necessary.



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# Advice

To expose oneself to opposing viewpoints is tricky. If we digest information from a news source geared toward an angry base whose views differ from ours, we'll get even angrier at the "lies" they are spreading. If we go to a neutral news source, we will read/watch/listen with our own ideas in mind and our confirmation bias will cause us to hear what we want to hear within the information.

Reading rational commentary from both sides of the aisle in the Editorial section of major (and local) newspapers is a good way to see both sides of an issue without being overloaded with propaganda. But, most importantly, read everything presented to us as being fact with a discerning eye. Do the research. Google it. Examine the story elements. Does it add up?

Even it feels true, it might not be true.