

## **DON'T LOOK AWAY**

*Requiem for a World That Never Was*  
*by meaghan boeing*

### **I. Don't Look Away**

Come closer, friend,  
stranger,  
hold my hand if you need,  
just don't look away.

If you have only  
just now  
opened your eyes,

Welcome.

If you have been riveted  
for years,  
frozen in shock,  
unsure of your place,

Welcome.

If your heart is breaking,  
but your mind resisting,

You are welcome, too.

Come,  
listen,  
link arms,  
breathe with us,  
be with us.

Just don't look away.

## II. Black Lives Matter

Black Lives Matter.

*All Lives Matter.*

*All Lives cannot Matter*  
until  
Black Lives Matter.

*All Lives will Matter*  
when  
Black Lives Matter.

How can you say that  
*All Lives Matter*  
when Black Lives are in  
danger?

And they are in  
danger.

Do not be afraid to  
stop and see  
a system  
set up to harm  
Black Lives,  
as if they do not matter.

When Black Lives Matter,  
*All Lives Matter.*

*All Lives do Matter,*  
so  
Black Lives *must* matter.

Listen. Hear.

Then shout, cry, scream  
Truth.

Black Lives Matter.

### III. Protest

If you ask politely, and no one listens,  
What then?

If you bring your reason, your knowledge, your passion,  
and there is  
No Response,

if you then shout to get their attention, and no one listens,  
How do you feel?

If you scream, and there is  
Silence,

if you are ignored,  
expected to fail,  
expected to fail,  
told by the Silence that none of this is for you,

you might take to the streets,  
and lock arms  
a thousand strong,  
a million strong,  
ten million strong,  
as one.

You might,  
risking your life,  
walk out into a  
country  
that thinks  
you're a threat,

when you're not,

you just need  
things  
to  
change.

You might,  
in your sorrow and rage,  
raise your fist in the air,  
creating  
Power  
out of solidarity,

or else no one will ever really see you.

After all,

they made that clear  
when all you were doing was asking  
for a small part  
of the  
American Dream.

#### IV. Small Steps\*

I see I'll never understand,  
but I can listen,  
and I can learn.  
I can do better.

For justice.

For right.

I cannot unsee,  
I will not unhear.

It is late. I am late.  
But I am here.

I will trip and fall and make mistakes,  
but I will get up,  
and keep moving forward.

I know "I will never finish the work,  
But I also know that I cannot abandon it."

"None of us is free until all of us are free."

It is not enough.  
It will never be enough.

It is a step.

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\* Source Quotes:

*"You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it." - Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers), 2:21*

*"Until we are all free, we are none of us free." - Emma Lazarus (first usage of the phrase)*

*"Nobody's free until everybody's free." - Fanny Lou Hamer*

## V. Tear Gas/Day of Judgment<sup>†</sup>

*No Justice, No Peace! Black Lives Matter! Say Her Name! Say Their Names!*

<i>Dies irae, dies illa, solvet saeculum in favilla,</i>	<i>Translation: The day of wrath, that day, will dissolve the world into ash,</i>
<i>quantus tremor est futurus, quando iudex est venturus,</i>	<i>how much trembling there will be, when the judge comes,</i>
<i>Mors stupebit, et natura, cum resurget, creatura, iudicanti responsura.</i>	<i>Death and nature will marvel when all creation rises to answer the Judge.</i>
<i>liber scriptus proferetur, in quo totum continetur,</i>	<i>the written book will be brought forth in which all is contained.</i>

Three white officers, holding tear gas canisters:

Why can't they just  
go home? *No justice! No Peace!*

Why can't they just  
*go home?* *No justice! No Peace!*

Tenor:

Look at them. They feel like they are owed something by this world. That's not how it works. I got where I am because I worked hard. I didn't have it easy just because of the color of my skin. That's ridiculous! We have laws, and we made laws to help them! Years ago! There's no such thing as "systemic racism"!	<i>Why? Why?!</i> <i>We have laws.</i> <i>It's not enough.</i>  <i>There is</i> <i>systemic racism!</i>
These people... they'll get what they deserve. Disrespecting me. Blue Lives Matter!	<i>Black Lives Matter!</i>

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<sup>†</sup> "Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble." - John Lewis

"I have a dream..." - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"...the arc bends toward justice, but it only bends toward justice because people pull it towards justice. It doesn't happen on its own." - Eric Holder

Soprano: I just want to be home.  
I don't want to hurt anyone.  
I would speak up, but no one would listen.  
That's just the way it is.  
Nothing is changing.  
Maybe it needs to be that way.  
For us.  
For our safety.  
For our lives.

I help people.  
Most of the time.  
I want to help people.  
The good ones.  
So I do what I have to do.

Baritone: I just don't know.  
I just.  
Don't.  
Know.  
That was wrong, what they did to that man.  
This is wrong. Using tear gas!  
Why can't this all just go away?

*Listen, listen, listen.*

*Get in the streets,  
Stay in the streets,  
Speak in your homes, your places of work, worship and play.*

*Listen to the leaders, these powerful Black voices,  
Talk about the original sin of this nation,  
The enslavement and oppression of Black People,  
Discrimination in housing and jobs and voting,  
All legal,  
All still with us,  
Too long legitimate to be erased easily,  
White privilege passed down through generations  
Like heirloom quilts with stories stitched in the squares.*

*Get in "good trouble,"  
"Dream,"  
Yes, dream, but also  
Fight,  
Vote,  
March.*

*Grab the "moral arc of the universe" and bend it toward justice.*

*Our children and our children's children and our children's children's children,  
they will judge us on what we do today,  
where we stand  
where we walk  
what we change.*

*Get in the streets.  
Stay in the streets.*

## **VI. Offering**

What do I have to offer?  
To this struggle,  
These four hundred years of ugly history?

I offer my ears to listen,  
my mind to comprehend,  
my hands to work,  
my voice to lift up the cries of the oppressed.

I offer what's mine.

I offer it all.

I offer my arms to wrap around  
the pain  
and hurt

of hearts  
too tired  
to break  
one more time.

## **VII. Lacrimosa**

Weep, weep on that Day  
when from the Ashes we rise  
to be judged.

Weep for the loss of so much time.  
Weep for the world that never was.  
Weep for our world,  
Weep for blindness.

Weep for the days and weeks and months and years and years,  
for every moment

inertia prevailed  
over learning more,  
doing right,

for every moment the world was as it was  
not how it should be.

Weep for sorrow cloaked in shame.

We were told  
that to see color was wrong,  
but we were failed, too,  
by that blindness,

by ignorance,  
arrogance,  
were failed.

Color is everywhere:  
Undeniable,  
Beautiful  
Neglected  
no more.

Glorious.

Weep,  
weep again  
for blindness.

O, listen  
to the voices and the tears and the struggles and the triumphs.

And weep most for the pain of the beautiful  
Black and Brown  
souls that in all those years  
were never seen.

### **VIII. Due**

It's not going  
to cost you  
nothing,

but, then,

you paid nothing



for it  
either.

This power  
created by a lie  
that those  
Americans before America  
took  
and ran with,

using the lives  
of  
enslaved  
people,  
digesting their languages and their songs and their dances and their stories  
into fuel  
for building wealth  
for the white few,

then growing this lie  
so large  
that it could not be argued with  
(they argued),

that it must be true,

for these were good people,

weren't they?

And today,  
there are good people  
descended from  
good  
people

(aren't they?)

asking  
how so many loved and cherished  
could harbor  
such evil.

So these good people live with lies,

the scaffold on which sits wealth  
(if we have it)  
and certainly the privilege to  
walk the streets in peace  
or  
buy a home

or  
get an education  
or  
choose leaders

without  
the threat of  
violence  
from the state or  
from neighbors

and without the possibility  
that every interaction  
has the  
potential  
to turn  
ugly

(for they  
are good  
people  
...).

Good people protecting memory with lies.

The system is a lie.

For if neighbors,  
family,  
ancestors,  
founders,

believed evil,

what does that make  
the power they passed down?

Abandon it, then.  
Use white privilege to destroy itself.

It will not cost you nothing.

But it will give you everything.

Because it will bring  
Justice  
and  
the sweet song of  
Peace.

## IX. On Peace

The struggle continues,

our responsibility,  
our right,  
what's right.

Listen. Listen more.

*Our right.*

Do more. Do better.

*What's right.*

We have asked  
Black and Brown people  
to carry our emotional weight  
for too long.

*What's right.*

Bring them to the center.  
Comfort them,  
do not ask for comfort.

This is our labor. This is our work.

So we will work. And work. And work. And work.

And one day,  
there will be rest.

But peace must be earned,  
and  
where there is no justice,  
there cannot be peace.

(no)  
Justice,

(no)  
Peace.

Black Lives Matter.  
Don't Look Away.