



No Breath (2020)
Tamara White
 Mixed media on panel

breathe

/brēTH/

verb.

take air into the lungs and then expel it, especially as a regular physiological process.

Breath. Breathe. Health.

Equity. Safety. Freedom of speech.

Wear your mask, stay inside. Don't ask why. Yes sir. No sir. Hands up. Don't shoot. Say their name. The culmination of stress and words, instructions, and rules as a virus, viruses, take them out. Them, who don't look like me. Does it look like you? Who beg for their breath while a mystery virus steals the air from the lungs. Who beg for their breath under the knee of an officer with his hand in his pocket. Masks required. To keep out the virus and hide away the reality of racism, this country is concealing – not well. The past and the present, coming to a head. There's a pandemic in the hospitals. An epidemic in the streets as cities burn down. Righting the wrongs of the past, wishing away the reality to start anew. Breathe. Just breathe.

I can't breathe. I can't breathe. I... can't.... breathe.

The world is colliding under two separate pandemics - COVID-19 and the continuous brutality toward black and brown bodies. Both epidemics impact the ability to breathe. The COVID virus affects the respiratory system; police brutality has taken away the breath of George Floyd, Breanna Taylor, and numerous others before them. Communities of color have been unable to catch their breath since the tragedy of 1619.

Masks – required to protect oneself from the virus. Yet our country has metaphorically been hiding behind a mask. Ignoring the realities of the vulnerable and marginalized among us. And now, the mask is off, no longer protecting us. Our country is choking and gasping for change as protesters march in the street. Trying to breathe life. Trying to create space for every . single . one . of . us....

About Tamara White

Tamara White is a multimedia artist pursuing a doctorate in museum studies at Union Institute and University, focusing on the intersection of art, social justice, and health equities.