



I CAN'T BREATHE

©By Pamela Best

It's 11:08 PM, September 21, 2011

And I can't breathe

Through these sobs and heaves of despair and hurt

That rack my body and cloud my understanding

of how injustice is a demanding task master that

Shatters the hearts of the people and equally satisfies

Lying eyes that despise truth and reproof

“an eye for an eye...tooth for a tooth”

It doesn't matter whose

Just blood for blood

Evidence, or lack thereof

as clear as mud.

“somebody has to pay”

And on any given day it could be you.

Your son

Railroaded and innocent to everyone
But those with fingers on the trigger
Just another ni**er to those who propose
Needles in veins
And it seems we struggle in vain against a system
Of chains and valences
With no checks or balances to weigh out the truth
And those who lied
Whether to hide their own guilt
Or from being pressured, to the hilt, to point a finger
The blood of an innocent man lingers
Long after you retract your fabrications
This nation is so stagnant in a quagmire of hatred
Rooted so deep in sacred goo-old-boy tradition
That extradition to a higher state of thinking
Seems an impossibility
And it's 1963, September 15th at 10:22am
And I can't breathe
And I can't see past the memory of 4 little girls
Blown to smithereens while Chambliss ran free
Until 1977 and he was given life

While Troy Davis was given Death

For a crime he did not commit

And it is February 4, 1999, 12:45 A.M

And I can't breathe

'cause I want to scream to Amadou not to leave his apartment tonight

That whatever he might have needed from the store wasn't important anymore

That on the other side of his door were 41 reasons to stay inside

19 connect

And someone neglected to warn him; inform him that his keys couldn't unlock

Locked minds bent on destroying his kind

Where was blood for his blood?

And in my mind it is November 25th, 2006 4:15 A.M

I am him and he is helpless and unarmed

Swarmed by a death squad

And the odds levied against him at birth have come calling

For his life; for him to pay the price of being male and black in this America

This massacre of Sean Bell couldn't compel conviction in the hearts of courts or juries

Or judges who can't see the smudges of black names coated in the black pain of countless

Teardrops and countless crooked cops and countless traffic stops and countless bullets

Rock Laodicea to sleep while Babylon roars and we weep

And the streets run with the blood of our children whose run-ins with the system may

Cost their lives and we wonder why they don't value each other or even themselves.

Why should they when repeatedly they are told through word and deed that they don't matter; that their lives and dreams and breath don't matter?

It's 7:17PM, February 26, 2012, and I can't breathe

And I can't believe what I am hearing/what I am reading/what I am seeing

He is leaving the house for the last time. It never crossed his mind that walking to the store

Was an offense worth dying for.

He just wanted some tea and a pack of skittles for his soon-to-be little brother.

Nothing other than half-time snacks in mind, but he didn't know that his kind was feared

And appeared "suspicious" and "high" by evil eyes that spy around the neighborhood, playing robin

hood. He wore a hood to shield himself from the rain and I wished it could have shielded him from the

pain and fear that must have gripped his heart when he noticed the car following him and when

A stranger named Zimmerman got out and approached him. Cold, alone, in the dark of night

Instinct kicks in: Fight or flight

Stranger Danger!!! Scream and fight

Shots ring out ..this can't be right!

A 17 yr old boy lies dead in the street. A John Doe in the morgue

His family completely oblivious until the next afternoon because this child was assumed disposable

I find that opposable. His name WAS TRAYVON he had a dad and a mom and a life

It's 3:08PM, February 28, 2012, the day after

And my laughter has been swallowed whole by the hole left in my soul last night

So I have no choice but to fight ...for air

If I dare to live

If I expect to give my son a chance at survival when all the world is his rival

And his life is but a trifle in the eyes of wicked men

I have no choice, then, but to fight

So I won't spend another night like my last

Gasping between sobs and teardrops

While I rock my son and fear for his future

There is no suture but protest.

No Peace without progress

No justice unless we fight and love and stay on our knees

It's 11:46 AM, March 25, 2012

And I can't breathe.

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