



LET US LIVE

The quilt features a variety of images including a man carrying a child, a family group, a woman holding a child, a person in a boat, a person in a wheelchair, and a person sitting. The quilt is decorated with small white circular markers and a cowrie shell. The text 'LET US LIVE' is written in a bold, multi-colored font across the center.

# Walking on White Fragility

By Kimberly Smith

The week after - I stroll into work.  
Everything is normal,  
as normal as can be,  
except an array of emotions  
are boiling within me.

I blink to fight tears.  
The weight of this trauma seems surreal.  
Another Black man,  
another Black,  
another man  
killed.

“So what do you think about the protest?  
I don’t condone violence,  
nor do I believe in avoidance or silence.  
But I just don’t understand marching around  
protesting with no plan.  
And  
There has to be something better than this.  
I am all for diversity.  
And  
I respect your thoughts  
You’re always so sincere  
Where do we go from here?”

“Where do WE go from here?”  
That’s an interesting question  
More like a lesson, but I suppose  
you should be told since you asked.

I appreciate the sentiment  
and the sincerity in you wanting clarity,  
but let me be clear,

I don’t need your charity.

This work calls for transformation,  
and any hesitation of you tiptoeing on the  
fragility in which you stand  
hand over heart grasping for your privilege  
because you can,  
leaves me back at square one.

But if it’s a true answer that you seek, then allow me.

This multilayer system has made Brown and Black people victims,  
and I fear it’s too embedded in our psyche to remedy any quick solution.  
You won’t be able to have it your way.  
Nor will you be exempt under any circumstances  
from not being a part of this issue.  
But I’ll tell you what I fear—  
bearing my soul only for your privilege to take hold  
and contradict my reality.  
So these are the rules as I spill my truth:

Check your privilege at the door;  
no more do I want to hear that you can relate.  
In this country, for as long as I can remember,  
there has been a state of emergency.

It is with the utmost urgency  
that we begin to address YOUR issues with race.  
You can’t save face by creating a “demon racist.”  
with painted faces of uneducated good ol’ boy southern whites  
because even our progressives are selective in unconscious hate.

Though some of you are late  
to the reality, that race is still an issue,  
solving it becomes official when you do YOUR part.  
No, I won’t be providing you with a booklist or resources or training.

And by the way, it’s not polite - you complaining about the inconvenience of  
my people’s pain. Like Martin said, “Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever.  
The yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself”.

Let me pull back the curtains because this much is certain -  
I want to be free to love as you love.  
No caution thrown to the wind as I contend my views,  
To ride a bicycle in a neighborhood with the sun kissing my skin  
free of the worry of being stopped, harassed, or asked  
because this golden brown is the ultimate sin.

I want white tears to be withheld  
so truth can spill from tongues without question.

I want you to see my color and know my struggle  
Without the backlash of your guilt,  
like daggers, assassinating my character.

I need you to see me when you think of America.

But mostly, I want to relinquish the burden of defending my race  
And avoid the predictability of justifying my existence in white space.

You are safe. You get to choose when and where these conversations take place,  
while my participation is mandatory.

Because it’s our stories that you write  
When you shield yourself from negligence.

You ask, “Where do we go?”  
My response, “What is a movement without a destination?”

Whether you decide to take action or stand in hesitation  
I’ll still be fighting tears when Black men die.  
I’ll still hear his haunting last cry -  
I will still be witnessing the masses of White people turning a blind eye.  
But maybe since you ask,  
You’ll be still long enough to hear  
the crackle of white fragility  
Beneath my feet as I cautiously  
move through YOUR world  
designed for my defeat.

HOW DO WE  
MOVE FORWARD?