

HERE and there:

An open letter to white women in the movement to end gender-based violence

Dear White Women:

Welcome. I'm glad you are HERE. Let's talk about here and over there.

I hope **this time** you will stay here. When I saw hundreds of lovely pink knitted hats across the country, I was finally convinced that you were here to stay.

For years white feminism has waged a war against Black women, Black men, Black children, Black babies and our Black communities. With too many casualties to name them all. It wasn't televised, it wasn't video-taped, but the pain and scars remain visible in the lunch rooms and board rooms over there. Those most impacted have been silenced on the margins. Like my sister Lina Juarbe Botella would say, on the margin of the margins. You know them well. You should call them by their names. **Say Their Names.** All Black Lives Matter. So, **Say Their Names.**

I wonder...

Why did you choose to leave us wounded over there and not join us over here?

You remained silent over there. THERE. The place where you can choose not to partake because Black lives are not the priority over there. See, animals are treated with more humanity than Black men over there.

The words spoken by a white woman from over there have never left my ear, "*If I saw a black man walking down a dark alley, I would probably cross-over to the other side of the street...*" she said...Imagine working alongside a white woman who openly stated she would cross the street by the mere sight of my son. Yes, my son, he is also a Black man.

Imagine. The Fear. The Hypocrisy. While chanting "freedom for all." **All Black Lives Matter.**

I wonder...

Are you really ready to join us over here?

See, we don't have the option to abandon and jump ship over here. Here is where we flourish. Here is where we thrive. Here is where we build community to stay alive. **All Black Lives Matter** over here.

Gender-based violence is your work, you say!

Pearlie Gordon (age 93)- Hearne, TX
Michelle Cusseaux (age 50)- Phoenix, AZ
Tanisha Anderson (age 37)- Cleveland, OH
Natasha McKenna (age 37)- Alexandria, VA

Her last words were, *"You promised you wouldn't kill me."*

Mya Hall (age 27)- Baltimore, MD
Alexia Christian (age 26)- Atlanta, GA
Joyce Curnell (age 50)- Charleston County, SC
Ralkina Jones (age 37)- Cleveland Heights, OH
India Kager (age 28)- Virginia Beach, VA
Kisha Michael (age 31)- Inglewood, CA
Korryn Gaines (age 23)- Baltimore, MD
Deborah Danner (age 66)- New York City, NY
Michelle Shirley (age 39)- Torrance, CA
Charleena Lyles (age 30)- Seattle, WA
Decynthia Clements (age 34)- Elgin, IL
Pamela Turner (age 45)- Baytown, TX
Atatiana Jefferson (age 28)- Fort Worth, TX
Breonna Taylor (age 26)- Louisville, KY

Just to name a few.

I wonder...

Since gender-based violence is your work. Do you even know their names?

SAY THEIR NAMES

REMEMBER EACH NAME. **All Black Lives Matter.** Over here.

As a black, heterosexual, immigrant woman, who has been suffocated by white women for many years in this movement to end gender-based violence, I made a conscious decision to stay here. My ancestors paid the price for me to be here.

This movement was founded by Black women's blood sweat and tears, so I am not going anywhere. I may not always be welcomed over there, but my sisters always have my back over here.

Many of my sisters decided to take their passion and drive elsewhere. The soul crushing and excruciating pain was too much to bear over there.

ACV Consulting & Coaching was birthed because of the suffocation I experienced over there.

You see, black women always need a Plan B while working on Plan A with white women over there.

I wonder...

How can you be silent about what's happening to Black women over there?

How are you planning to dismantle your oppressive system so that our voices and lived experiences are welcomed and centered over there?

HERE and There.

I wonder... what will really change over there.

As I continue to reflect on my over 25-year journey – and the plight of sisters that look like me- moving between here and there...

- Did you need those **8 minutes and 46 seconds** in order to finally join us over here?
- Did you need to witness the murder of another Black man to join us over here?
- What about the sister that filmed George Floyd's murder did you lift her up in your thoughts today?
- Did the racial pandemic of 400 years not affect you until today? **May 25, 2020**

Anyway, since you are now here, let me be clear. **All Black Men Are Welcomed Over Here.** Black women, Black voices and Black communities decide what accountability looks like for our Black Kings over here.

Are you still here or are you ready to go back over there?

The uprising. The rude awakening. This moment.

Are you really here to stay?

Over the last few weeks, as I've sat through too many conversations about racism, racial inequities, racial justice and anti-Blackness, witnessing white fragility on steroids, reading the bold and powerful ally statements floating around the web, and noticing the Black Lives Matter T-shirts being worn by "so-called" allies, and the big BOLD statements at the rallies, and the urgency to defund the police and hold the criminal justice accountable...

I wonder...

- Can you also create a fund for Black women and men that were traumatized, silenced, dismissed and undermined over there? Because, like my sisters say quite frequently, **"therapy ain't cheap."** Over here.
- What about the black women that you escorted out of your programs over there? See over there she was terminated. Let go. Because she was inappropriate and angry. But truth be told, she was let go because her mere presence made you uncomfortable.

Over there.

You remember her? And her. And her. And her. *Will you finally acknowledge their pain and say their names?* **Say Her Name.**

See, we had to tend to her crushed spirit and wounded soul over here. We had to work overtime so my sister could feel whole again. All Black Lives Matter. Over here. **Say Her Name.**

Yes, you can't defund one system and not accept and acknowledge the pain and suffering Black women and men have endured over there.

I wonder...

What has really changed over there? I'm puzzled. Along with gender-based violence, systemic racism and racial injustices have been visible for decades and years.

So, I challenge you to think about what has really changed for YOU, over there?

Black women have been telling you for years, the criminal justice system is not working for them. Over there. They are not operating in a survivor-centered “trauma-informed” manner (just a few words to describe what you say is at your core...). Over there. They are harming Black women, Black men, Black children, Black babies and wounding Black communities. She said. Over there.

Why the sudden pivot? Why this new-found sense of urgency?

Are Black women suddenly now credible over there?

I wonder...

Did George Floyd’s cry for his mama suddenly deem Black women- Black mamas- credible over there? Now do you finally believe that Black women are the pillars of change over there AND over here?

See over here, when one Black child hurts, all Black mamas’ hearts cry. Every Black mama felt George Floyd’s pain and heard his cry. That’s the power of Black motherhood.

Because, see, we (Black mamas) are unquestionably integral to the well-being of our families and communities. Over here.

The only way to end gender-based violence is shifting power and resources over here. Here. The place that was created by Black women for Black people. Through blood, sweats and tears, we’ve always been here. Our ancestors paved the way for us to be here. And we ain’t going nowhere...

But again, I challenge you to reflect on what has really changed for YOU over there? It’s time to come face-to-face with the “unspoken” reasons for the sense of urgency. The history of anti-Black racism and inequities that have threatened the well-being of Black people. Not elsewhere, but over there.

Shout out for the powerful anti-Black racism statements that have been circulating on the world wide web; did Black Women ask you to speak on behalf of our communities or did you just have that same pressing feeling that you had to- do something- say something- make something?

Mmmh... But did you ask Black women if you were doing and saying the right thing?

I wonder...

Are you creating another box *over there* and expect a few selected black women to join you over there?

Or

Are you really ready to join us over here?

Black women know how to dismantle systems and lead change. Titles don't do it for us. It's in our DNA. Our mamas, aunties, grandmamas, grand aunties, great-grandmamas taught us well.

Over here. Black women and Black communities have the answers you need to end gender-based violence. Are you willing to drop the farce and finally join us over here?

And before you tell a Black woman or Black man, "*be grateful that everyone is outraged now, and things are starting to change.*"

Check your privilege and pay attention to your tone- instead just fall back and acknowledge the harm you have done.

Our historical experiences and stories are with us always. They have purpose. They shape who we were then, who we are now and who we will become.

Also, before shame and guilt have you calling all your Black friends to ask if my truth is real, let me be very clear, I don't speak for all of us – but I am confident that I speak for many of us. I Am My Sister's Keeper.

Again, welcome. I'm pleased you are here. I hope **this time** you are here to stay. Join the uprising over here.

HERE vs. over there! In my native dialect rest assured, *Black women run tings ova yah suh.*

This time. Are you really ready to join us over here?

#SAYHERNAME

#WECANTBREATHE

#ALLBLACKLIVESMATTER

Over here.

If you are really finally here to stay. As you defund the police and dismantle oppressive systems- shift the power and resources over here- and start all over-over there...

You see. Over here. Black women are natural leaders. We are policymakers. We are organizers. We are truth-seekers. We are storytellers. We are nurturers. We are teachers. We are healers. We are our ancestors' wildest visions.

Black women.

We are not only magical. We are phenomenal. And we get sh** [stuff] done....

Over here.

To my sisters of color, you already know *what it is* and *what needs to be done*.

Signed: An Unapologetic Black Woman

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Join or support the uprising [HERE](#).

Here are 10 ways that you can make an effort to show up differently for your Black friends and colleagues. [Please take heed](#).

Connect with [Ujima](#), the National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community, to learn more about ways to support Black women and Black communities.