

## Summoning the Divine: Meditation: Breath of God (July 2020)

### 1. Hymn: *Breathe on me, Breath of God* (1878). Edwin Hatch (1838-1889)

YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M5keJHZdWYM&list=RDM5keJHZdWYM&start\\_radio=1&t=35](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M5keJHZdWYM&list=RDM5keJHZdWYM&start_radio=1&t=35)



1. *Breathe on me, Breath of God, / Fill me with life anew, / That I may love what Thou dost love, / And do what Thou wouldst do. Breathe on me, Breath of God, / Until my heart is pure, / Until with Thee I will one will, / To do and to endure.* 2. *Breathe on me, Breath of God, / Till I am wholly Thine, / Until this earthly part of me / Glows with Thy fire divine.* 3. *Breathe on me, Breath of God, / So shall I never die, / But live with Thee the perfect life / Of Thine eternity.* [Artwork is from *Stone Pillows*.]

“If we understand the idea of God, especially the Holy Spirit, being like a breath or wind, we can grasp the meaning of the Hebrew word *Ruach*. This word refers to God as a breath, a wind, or a life force that sustains all living things, human beings included.” --Hope Bilinger



2. **The Evolution of Martin Luther King, Jr., Baptist Minister and Civil Rights Activist (1968-1968).** Many believe that King’s words and historic efforts as the Moses of the civil rights movement stand out as the most significant instance of a modern Christian leader acting in a prophetic role to instigate political change.

**2A. *I have a Dream*** was delivered during the huge August 28, 1963 *March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom* that called for civil and economic rights and an end to racism in the U.S. This YouTube link provides comments on the speech & selections from it. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBoi6bJJjw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBoi6bJJjw) 4:57 min. Link to complete *I have a Dream* speech. [www.let.rug.nl/usa/documents/1951-/martin-luther-kings-i-have-a-dream-speech-august-28-1963.php](http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/documents/1951-/martin-luther-kings-i-have-a-dream-speech-august-28-1963.php).

Selections from the Speech’s Conclusion. “...I say to you today, my friends, so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal’....I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character....I have a dream that in Alabama.... little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

[He weaves in Isaiah 40: 3-5.] *I have a dream that very valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.* This is our hope...With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day....From every mountainside, let freedom ring. And when this happens, and when we allow freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God’s children, black men and white men, Jews and gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, ‘Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!’”

**2B. Introduction & Selections: King’s Christian Movement in a Revolutionary Age: The Role of the Behavioral Scientist in the Civil Rights Movement.**

**Introduction.** In 1967, 38-year-old King was already president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize when he took the podium at the American Psychological Association’s Annual Convention in Washington, D.C. He asks members, whom he called ON “friends of good will” to “tell it like it is.” He pleads for help in changing a society “poisoned to its soul by racism.” The speech was very well received. Ironically and tragically, while the speech was in the galley proofs to be published in the APA Journal, the shocking news of King’s assassination was released.

In *Christian Movement*, King fuses the philosophies of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament regarding revolutionary social change. He argues that the most creative and constructive revolutionary force is one that combines the Hebrew Bible’s *righteousness and justice that flow down like a mighty stream (Amos 5:24)* with the New Testament’s call to love one’s enemies and to bless those who persecute you. [Matthew 5:44.] King also asserts that God has been working actively since the time of Moses for the freedom & perfection of people and society. His rousing conclusion voices his dream and the dream of us all.

Speech Link: [peacehouse.net/martinlutherkingjr/](http://peacehouse.net/martinlutherkingjr/)

**Selections from King’s Speech.** “When Moses walked into the court of the Pharaoh and thundered out the call to *Let my people go*, he introduced into history the concept of a God who was concerned about the freedom and dignity of all his children and who was willing to turn heaven and earth that freedom might be a reality. Throughout the history of Israel as recorded in the Hebrew Bible, we see God active in the affairs of men and women, struggling against the forces of evil that beset them and seeking to mold a people who will serve as His children as partners in building the kingdom here on earth. The God of our fathers is the God of revolution. He will not be content with anything less than perfection in His children and in their society.

It is this strong biblical tradition that has been the foundation of the freedom struggle for the past three centuries...The past ten years have seen the blossoms of freedom come near to full bloom...I say that this is the world’s most creative and constructive revolutionary force, for it has brought changes without destruction; it has established justice in areas once dominated by the terror and lawlessness of the Ku Klux Klan and yet it has not destroyed the person or property of our enemies; and communities that yesterday toiled with tension are now moving forward to new heights of brotherhood and understanding....”

**Maya reads 2 YouTube choices for *Still I Rise*.** #1 is a much older Maya; #2 is a younger, sassier Maya. You’ll enjoy both: the same poem, but very different delivery. (1) Older Angelou: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqOq050LSZO>; (2) Younger & sassier Angelou: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qviM\\_GnJbOM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qviM_GnJbOM)

### 3. Maya Angelou, *Still I Rise!* (1978)

**Does my sassiness upset you?  
Why are you beset with gloom?  
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells  
pumping in my living room.**

**Just like moons and like suns  
with the certainty of tides,  
Just like hopes springing high, still I'll rise.**

**Did you want to see me broken?  
Bowed head and lowered eyes?  
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,  
weakened by my soulful cries?**

**Does my haughtiness offend you?  
Don't you take it awful hard  
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines  
diggin' in my own backyard.**

**You may shoot me with your words,  
You may cut me with your eyes,  
You may kill me with your hatefulness,  
But still, like air, I'll rise.**

**Out of the huts of history's shame -- I rise  
Up from a past that's rooted in pain -- I rise  
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,  
welling and swelling I bear in the tide.**

**Leaving behind nights of terror and fear -- I rise  
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear -- I rise  
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave...  
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.  
I rise ... I rise ... I rise!**



#### **Maya Angelou (1928-2014).**

Poet, dancer, singer, activist, and scholar, Maya is a -famous author, who is best known for her poetry and autobiographical writing. Her works deal with family, powerful women, poverty and segregation and with the theme that all of us are

important and valuable. As a child, Maya heard and sang a 19<sup>th</sup> C. African-American song; she never forgot this line: ***God put a rainbow in the clouds***. She often referred to that line, offering this wisdom:

***Prepare yourself so that you can be a rainbow in somebody else's cloud. Somebody who may not look like you, may not call God the same name you call God—if they call God at all... And may not eat the same dishes prepared the way you do, may not dance your dances, or speak your language. But be a blessing to somebody who's not like you.***

Born Marguerite Johnson, she took the stage name *Maya Angelou*. She spent much of her childhood in Stamps, Arkansas. Later, she studied drama and dance in San Francisco, dropping out to become the city’s first black female cable car conductor. As a single mother, she danced at a strip club before touring in productions of George Gershwin and Dubose Hayward’s black musical *Porgy and Bess*. She worked on civil rights issues with Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcom X and met Nelson Mandela while spending several years in Egypt and Ghana.

In 1969, Maya published her first autobiography. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* became a huge success. It made Maya an international star and allowed her to write full time. She went on to become a celebrated poet, educator, producer, actress, and film maker. She received over 50 honorary doctoral degrees. Five days before she died in North Carolina, she sent this final TWEET: *Listen to yourself and in that quietude you might hear the voice of God.*

**4. Christopher Soto, *ALL THE DEAD BOYS LOOK LIKE ME (June 15, 2016) For Orlando***  
Comment by Poetry editor Adam Fitzgerald. *This heartbreaking poem, written in the aftermath of Orlando, fuses love and outrage into a refusal of violence through the embrace of vulnerability, tenderness, & passion. It*

centers the identity of queer people of color in the in the face of not just one isolated, horrific and horrifying tragedy, but in an ongoing history that includes a “furious erasure.”



**[Soto is pictured left.] Biography.** Christopher Soto (b. 1991, Los Angeles) currently lives in Brooklyn. He has authored several poetry collections and is editor of *An Anthology Dedicated to Queer Poets of Color* (2018). He has worked with Amazon Literary Partnerships to establish grants for undocumented writers. He is currently working on a full-length poetry manuscript about police violence and mass incarceration. Here are selections from his poignant, frank poem.

## 2. Selections from *All the dead boys look like me*

**Last time, I saw myself die is when police killed Jessie Hernandez--a 17 year-old brown queer, who was sleeping in their car....Yesterday, I saw myself die again. Fifty times I died in Orlando.**

**And I remember reading Dr. José Esteban Muñoz before he passed. I was studying at NYU, where he was teaching, where he wrote things that made me feel like a queer brown survival was possible.**

**But he didn't survive.... And now, on the dancefloor, in the restroom, on the news, in my chest ...there are another fifty bodies, that look like mine, and are Dead.**

**And I have been marching for Black Lives and talking about police brutality against Native communities too, for years now, but this morning....I feel it, I really feel it again. How can we imagine ourselves--We being black native? Today, Brown people: How can we imagine ourselves when All the Dead Boys Look Like Us?**

**...The hands of my lover--yesterday--praised my whole body....In New York City, He propped me up like the roof of a cathedral before, we opened the news and read about people who think two brown queers cannot build cathedrals, only cemeteries.**

**And each time we kiss, a funeral plot opens. In the bedroom, I accept his kiss, and I lose my reflection. I am tired of writing this poem, but I want to say one last word....Yesterday, my father called. I heard him cry for only the second time in my life. He sounded like he loved me. It's something I am rarely able to hear...and hope, if anything, his sound is what my body remembers first.**

## 5. Selections from Claudia Rankine, *The Sound and the Fury* (2016)



**A. Biography.** Born in Jamaica, Rankine (1963- ) was educated at Williams College & Columbia University; she is on the Yale University faculty. Her 2014 poetry collection *Citizen: An American Lyric* received the National Book Award for Poetry. In 2016, she

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=upCFbREUvTk> . 9:17 min. Interview with Rankine.  
You'll find her discussion quite interesting.

was awarded a \$625,000 “genius” grant by the MacArthur Foundation. She decided to use the grant to establish an interdisciplinary think tank for artists and writers who study whiteness and examine race as a “construct.” Scholars generally applaud Rankine’s *exploration of unsettled boundaries, particularly those that explore the ways all of us have been defined from outside by skin color, economics, and global corporate culture.* More in this *Guardian* link: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/oct/19/claudia-rankine-macarthur-genius-grant-exploring-whiteness>

**B. Rankine’s Comment.** Rankine explains the idea behind her poem: *I thought about who wasn’t represented in my own work, and who I had little contact with in my own life. The answer was **poor working-class white people**.... So I wrote *Sound and Fury* in which I created the portrait (in part) of a cast-aside white; Rankine attempts to identify with poor whites. She argues that “white can’t know what white feels like” & “white can’t oust its own system.”*

Selections from Rankine poem, *Sound and Fury*

**Dispossessed despair, depression, despondent, dejection, the doom is the off-white of white. But wait....white can’t know what white feels. Where’s the life in that? Where’s the right in that? Where’s the white in that?**

**At the bone of bone white breathes the fear of seeing...the frustration of being unequal to white. White-male portraits on white walls were intended to mean ownership of all... And this is understandable, yes! Because the culture claims white owns everything—the wealth of no one anyone knows. Still the equation holds—jobs and health and schools and better than before and different from now and enough and always and eventually mine. This is what it means to wear a color and believe the embrace of its touch.**

**What white long expected was to work its way into an upwardly mobile fit. In the old days white included a life, even without luck or chance of birth. The scaffolding had rungs and legacy and the myth of meritocracy fixed in white. Now white can’t hold itself distant from the day’s touch—even as the touch holds so little white would own— foreclosure vanished pensions school systems in disrepair free trade rising unemployment, unpaid medical bills school debt car debt & debt,,,,debt.**

White is living its brick-and-mortar loss, staving off more loss, exhaustion, aggrieved exposure, a pale heart even as in daylight white hardens its features. Eyes, which hold all the light, harden. Jaws, which close down on nothing, harden. Hands, which assembled, and packaged, and built, harden into a fury that cannot call power to account ... =though it's not untrue jobs were outsourced and it's not untrue an economic base was cut out from under. It's not untrue. If people could just come clean about their pain, the being at a loss when just being white is not working.

Who said there is no hierarchy inside white walls? Who implied white owns everything even as it owns nothing? But white can't strike its own structure. White can't oust its own system. All the loss is nothing next to any other who can be thrown out. In daylight this right to righteous rage doubles down the supremacy of white in this way.

To be of use (1973)

**The people I love the best jump into work head first without dallying in the shallows...**


**I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a heavy cart, who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience, who strain in the mud and the muck to move things forward, who do what has to be done, again and again.**

**I want to be with people who submerge in the task, who go into the fields to harvest and work in a row and pass the bags along, ...who move in a common rhythm when the food must come in or the fire be put out.**

**The work of the world is common as mud. Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust. But the thing worth doing well done has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident.**

**Greek amphoras for wine or oil, Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums but you know they were made to be used. The pitcher cries for water to carry and a person for work that is real.**

**6. Marge Piercy (1936--)**  
 Selections from *To be of use* (1973)

 Born in Detroit during the Great Depression, Piercy is the first in her family to attend college. She has authored 15 novels, a play, and 17+ volumes of poetry. In this poem, Piercy insists that how people work

and support one another is as important as what they do. Along with her Jewish identity came a strong sense of solidarity with other victims of prejudice. Piercy explains: "Jews and blacks were always lumped together when I grew up. I didn't grow up 'white.' ....My first boyfriend was black. I didn't find out I was white until we spent time in Baltimore and I went to a segregated high school. I can't express how weird it was." Always the activist, she is an antiracist, against war, in favor of abortion rights, and supports



women's issues. She had 2 difficult marriages before meeting her current husband. They settled on Cape Cod. In the last 15 years, she has become involved in Jewish renewal. [Pictured Above: Greek amphora & Hopi corn vase.] Biography: <https://momentmag.com/at-home-with-marge-piercy/>

**7. Amiri Baraka (1934-2014), Selections from *As Agony. As Now* (1964)**



**Biography.** Baraka (formerly LeRoi Jones) was born in Newark, NJ. After 3 years in the U.S. Air Force, he became part of the 50's Greenwich Village Beat movement. After Malcolm X was assassinated, Jones took his new name, becoming involved in the Black Nationalist poetry & literature scenes. In 1968, he became a Muslim & added the prefix Imam (*spiritual leader*) to his name. In 1974, he dropped the prefix when he began identifying as a Marxist. Baraka is known for his aggressive style. His writing was controversial and often polarized readers. **Comment:** Baraka's descriptions are meant to terrify and disturb us just as he believed himself as disturbed and dispossessed. When he wrote this poem in 1964, black and white racial unrest and anger were erupting just as they are now. In this poem, he creates a dual personhood: the genuine black soul inside his body and his outside pretense of behaving like and with the "white" man. Ultimately, the body's flesh causes suffering: it "burns" the soul inside it and that soul "screams" (lines 44-5).

**Bio. Link:** <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/baraka-amiri-1934/>

*Selections from **As Agony. As Now** (1964)*

**I am inside someone who hates me. I look out from his eyes. Smell what fouled tunes come in to his breath....This is the enclosure...where innocence is a weapon. An abstraction....you are the soul I had and abandoned when I was blind and had my enemies carry me as a dead man]... (As now, as all his flesh hurts me.) It can be that...You lost your beautiful soul...Beauty...The slow river.....Cold men in their ...Ecstasy....The yes. (Their robes blown. Their bowls empty. They chant at my heels, not at yours.) ... Where the answer moves too quickly. Where the God is a self, after all...Cold air blown through narrow blind eyes. Flesh white hot metal glows... I live inside a bony skeleton you recognize as words or simple feeling. But it has no feeling. As the metal, is hot, it is not, given to love.**

**IT BURNS THE THING INSIDE IT. AND THAT THING SCREAMS!**

## 8. Lucille Clifton, *won't you celebrate with me* (1993)

Clifton is a delight! If you were a fan of radio's *Prairie Home Companion*, you'll recognize the voice of Garrison Keillor, who introduces Clifton. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XM7q\\_DUK5wU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XM7q_DUK5wU) 1:24 min. The poem is on the next page. **Listen to her YouTube reading first! Then read the poem.**

### 6. Lucille Clifton, *won't you celebrate with me* (1993) Clifton (1936-2010) Honors & Biography.



Born near Buffalo, NY, Clifton was employed in state and federal government until her first poetry collection *Good Times* (1969) was selected by the *New York Times* as one of the best books of the year. She remained in her job until 1971 when she became writer in residence at Coppin State College, Baltimore. She published her memoir *Generations* in 1976 and over the years created 16+ books for black children. She served as Maryland Poet Laureate (1979-1985) and was appointed Distinguished Professor of Humanities at St. Mary's College of Maryland (1975-1985). In 1988 she became the only author to have two collections selected as finalists for the Pulitzer Prize. In 1996, her collection *The Terrible Stories* was a finalist for the National Book Award. *Her Blessing the Boats: New and Selected Poems 1988-2000* won the National Book Award in 2000. She had six children and did most of her writing at the family's kitchen table. She was known for her great sense of humor and joy. After a long battle with cancer, Clifton died at age 73. You'll enjoy this remembrance of her. <https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/remembering-lucille-clifton>

**won't you celebrate with me  
what i have shaped into  
a kind of life?**

**i had no model.**

**born in babylon  
both nonwhite and woman  
what did i see to be except myself?**

**i made it up  
here on this bridge between  
sunshine and clay.**

**my one hand holding tight my  
other hand;  
come celebrate with me that  
everyday something has tried to  
kill me and has failed.**

## 9. Sweet Honey and the Rock, *Ella's Song: We who believe in Freedom cannot Rest* Dedicated to Civil Rights activist Ella Baker (1903-1986)



**9A. [Pictured: Sweet Honey at White House, 2009.]** *Sweet Honey and the Rock* was founded in 1973 by Bernice Johnson Reagon. She retired in 2004, but two original members and others continue the group's long heritage of freedom and gospel work. In 1991, *Sweet Honey* won a Grammy Award for Best Traditional Folk Album; they were also the subject of the 2005 documentary *Sweet Honey in the Rock*. The Group's name is based on Hebrew scripture and underscores the religious heritage behind their music.

**The Source of the Group's Name:** (1) Psalm 81:16-17. "Those who hate the LORD will try flattering him... their fate is fixed forever. But Israel... I will satisfy...with honey from the rock. (2) See also Deuteronomy 32: 12-13. "**The Lord alone led him . . he made Israel ride on the high places of the earth, and he ate of the increase of the field; and he made him suck honey out of the rock and oil out of the flinty rock**". Metaphorically, **honey from the rock could be considered as receiving the nectar/milk of the Word of God through the Holy Spirit (Hebrew: *Ruach ha-Kodesh*).**



**9B. Ella Baker (pictured in 1967).** Close to her former slave grandmother, Ella grew up in rural North Carolina. After graduating in 1927 as valedictorian from Shaw University (Raleigh, NC), she moved to New York. She quickly became one of the leading figures of the Civil Rights movement in the 1950's and 60's. Her co-workers soon gave her the nickname *Fundi*, a Swahili word that means *a person who passes down a craft to the next generation*. She was among the founders of Martin Luther King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1957 and launched the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee in 1960. Baker continued to fight for social justice and equality into her later years. While not so well-known as King or other famous Civil Rights figures, she was the most powerful force that ensured the success of the movement's most important organizations and events. Her name lives on through the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights.

**YouTube Link.** Bernice Reagon created *Ella's Song* as part of her score for the 1981 Ella Baker documentary. Reagon uses Baker's own words in the song. I urge you take a look and listen to the song on YouTube; you'll see visuals on Civil Rights past and current. It might take a short time for visual/audio to begin. The words are below. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EGQJmUsEE2I>. 3:28 min.

### 9C. *Ella's Song: We who believe in freedom cannot rest (1981)*

**Refrain:** We who believe in freedom cannot rest. We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes.

Repeated twice after each verse.

1. Until the killing of black men, black mothers' sons is as important as the killing of white men, white mothers' sons.
2. That which touches me most is that I had a chance to work with people...Passing on to others that which was passed on to me
3. To me young people come first, they have the courage where we fail...And if I can but shed some light as they carry us through the gale.
4. The older I get the better I know that the secret of my going on...Is when the reins are in the hands of the young, who dare to run against the storm.
5. Not needing to clutch for power, not needing the light just to shine on me...I need to be one in the number as we stand against tyranny.
6. Struggling myself don't mean a whole lot, I've come to realize....That teaching others to stand up and fight is the only way my struggle survives.
7. I'm a woman who speaks in a voice and I must be heard....At times I can be quite difficult, I'll bow to no man's word.



**10. A. Introduction. Activist Parker J. Palmer** (1939 - ) is a religious educator and a member of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). He brings his faith commitments to a variety of issues, including racial concerns. He is the impetus behind the Wisconsin-based Center for Courage and Renewal, an organization formed *to create a more just, compassionate, healthy, world by nurturing personal and professional integrity and the courage to act on it.*

**10B. Comments by Palmer on August 2014 shooting death.** Palmer, who lives in St. Louis, comments on the August 2014 shooting death of unarmed African American teenager Michael Brown. He points out that since that date, St. Louis has become an epicenter of social unrest and racial tension. Asks Palmer: ***What do we do with our discouragement at continuing racial injustice and the slow pace that people wake up to it?*** Here are Palmer's thoughts.

"We Americans must come to grips with the fact that racism is part of our DNA. It was bred into us from the very beginning of this country. Our founders were geniuses, but many had a very narrow definition of who "We the People" are: white, male, landed, gentry. Period. Amen. If you were a woman, Native American, a person of color, a white man who didn't own land — you just didn't count. And, they embraced slavery, some of them overtly and enthusiastically, and some of them in a highly ethically compromised way — but they embraced it....And we had to kill hundreds of thousands of each other off as Americans during the Civil War to take a modest step forward.

I say a "modest step" because it was followed by Jim Crow and now, by what some activists call "The New Jim Crow." This includes the fact that we have more people incarcerated in this country by percentage and by number than any other nation in the world. A huge preponderance of them are people of color, who are incarcerated for relatively minor drug offenses that research shows are committed at least as often by whites, but whites are neither pursued nor prosecuted nor imprisoned for those offenses. There is a tremendous amount of research to back this up. So, to get technically theological with you, we're just in one hell of a mess. We have to care about this and act on this."

**10C. Comments by Palmer on May 2020 death of George Floyd.** From a posting by Palmer.

***"I CAN'T BREATHE.*** Those words give voice to the terror that has haunted black and brown Americans since the founding of this country. They also serve as a tragic tag for a political-cultural era in which life has been choked out of so many and so much. There's much we can do. It starts with listening to all who are crying, *I can't breathe.* Souls—theirs, ours, & our country's—depend on us hearing and responding in every way we can.

*I can't breathe* were the dying words of a black man named **George Floyd** on May 25 as a police officer kept a knee on his neck for nearly nine minutes while Floyd lay handcuffed on the ground. They are words that thousands of lynching victims in this country might have said as they died, words that freedom-seekers now living in the limbo south of our border could say as they watch their dreams and sometimes their children die. All of this is rooted in the racism....to which too many whites have given silent assent.

*I can't breathe* might have been the dying words of the 100,000 + American victims of COVID-19 just before they were intubated, deaths that have hit communities of color the hardest. Fewer would have died if our leadership through the years had valued science above ideology, human life above the economy, and the public interest above their own....