

Martin, Are You Proud?

By Samantha Taylor

I am screaming.

I can't breathe!

Why me?!

Somebody help me as the fire lit bullet tore and ripped my flesh apart.

As my head shook hands with the pavement, I couldn't help but feel a surge of happiness.

Because this is what it was like to be black.

This was America's trophy to me. To us.

I was finally black.

The blood that seeped out of my chest prepared to make room for another black boy that would be drowned in the very same cycle.

And the tears that filled my eyes yelled "Martin I'm Home" and "Martin are you proud" as my soul drifted off into an unfamiliar place.



As I stand here in an attempt to illustrate one of the most revolutionary- not black man- but *human* I can't help but feel the exhaustion and your complaints as you prepare to hear about a man that you feel you know all too much about.

You've led yourself astray to believe knowing the first few lines of "I have a dream" makes you truly knowledgeable about the message he attempted to convey.

So why is it that when I am about to die that the last thing that surfaces my mind is the very thing that my people were robbed of...

Martin?

April 4, 1968 is not only the day that millions of strong willed, long-enduring, melanin infused African Americans lost their voice

But it was the day we lost the very ray of sunlight that ignited a yellow brick road of hope for better days.

What Martin did was reveal how ugly, dirty, and sickening the world truly is.

And you hated it.

Hated it so much that you decided to put him in your record books.

A book that reads the name of every *dead* **black** leader because the thought of a system that you benefit from changing pokes and pulls at your inability to share your stolen power.

Malcolm, Tupac, Medgar, Fred, Harriet.

And Martin.

Martin was my voice.

My speaker.

My motivation to be outspoken and not say... but *yell* my beliefs regardless of how much the truth makes you squirm.

Makes you uncomfortable.

So, when I use my slang and wear my weave don't call me ghetto

And don't you ever tell me how I should *feel*.

And when I'm at a black lives matter protest don't try to build be as a traitor of my race by telling me Martin wouldn't want me to be angry.

But you're right.

He wouldn't want us to be angry...

He would want us to be *enraged*.

Enraged at the fact that 40 years into his legacy and the only thing that has changed was your disappearing act and your ability to look me in the eyes and tell me that the reason I had to commute over 45 minutes everyday to a white school for a decent education, the reason I don't have enough fingers to count how many times I have been beaten by racial slurs or that the reason my heart aches, bleeds and trembles is *nonexistent*.

How dare you tell me I don't deserve to be fed up.

That I shouldn't be infuriated at the sight of my people being used as target practice, my mother being denied a job for being "over qualified" or having to comfort my friends because yet another one of their cousin's head was shot through.

Leaking.

For getting trapped in the steps the crooked system left.

But if Martin taught me anything is that he was much more than a person that shifted the world.

But he's all of us.

He's *in* all of us.

And no matter what.

We must always continue to move forward.

So, if I have to kneel then kneel,

Sit in then sit in.

Get sprayed by tear gas or feel your flesh scream when it kisses a taser-

No matter what...

You take action and stand firm in your beliefs.

You see, we love to look at these atrocities as if we aren't the generation that barely slipped through the cracks of the direct hatred that comes from having skin that shines like copper that is as smooth as your first kiss on a kindergarten playground.

But like Martin did, it takes great strength to hug a man that has put you at your lowest.

Because at the end of the day they are more devoted to their peace than our justice.

Our silence then success,

And any excuse in the book to villainize us or conceal the truth.

Black boys and girls don't let the mass incarceration, institutionalized racism, and any of the other setbacks of being black in America cloud your judgement of how beautiful, powerful, and important you truly are.

And no, you cannot emasculate our men, steal our culture, pit us against each other with your Eurocentric beauty standards, or go to our homeland drain it of its resources then take our people to a foreign land where they will face oppression, prejudice, and discrimination for centuries to come.

No, you cannot touch my hair, mock my dialect, try to push me into a box of what a black person should be then when I don't fit shoot fully loaded microaggressions at me that remind me and my people of how incompetent *you* truly think we are.

And don't you even think about saying the n word because you think it's trendy or say that "we use it too" without knowing that when you let those words slip through your tongue, I hear a whip cracking the bones of my ancestors' backs.

We will not be reduced to thugs, ratchet, ghetto, hood rat, or any other adjective that you think is ok to throw around at the expense of an entire race of people ready to say...

Enough is enough.

Want to know why?

Because we are Black panther partying, neurosurgeon doctors, peanut butter making, innovative, creative, monarchs, and melanated kings and queens.

We are plantation picking, pyramid building, culture creating, millionaire marchers that have proved themselves to be resilient leaders of the world!

*Pause

What makes you think the best black people can be is a reflection of you?

Martin knew it and fought for it.

But the thought of an educated black man is threatening.

So, I guess that how Martin makes me feel.

Prideful.

Fearful.

Angry.

But most importantly...

Powerful.

Because as I was granted another chance at life and the sight of the glistening gates of heaven were no longer in reach ...

Martin wanted me to remind you that not only is it critical that we continue to fight, but that no matter how hard it gets...

“If you can’t fly

then run.

If you can’t run,

then walk.

If you can’t walk,

then crawl.

But whatever you do...

Keep moving forward.”