Where I Stand

by Asiya Y9

Sometimes I feel misplaced
Like I'm there
But at the same time, I don't completely belong
Like everyone else knows
Where they fit
And I'm trying to figure out where I fit
Sometimes I feel too black
Other times somehow
I don't feel black enough
How confusing is that ?

Because how can I be too much of something
And not enough of it
at the same time?
Maybe I don't talk the way
That people expect me to
Maybe I don't listen to the
Music, they expect
"you're not really black like that"
Sometimes those words stay in your head
They make you question things
That you have never questioned before

Am I black enough?
But then I began to think
Black enough for who?
Who decided that there was
Only one way of being black
Who made these rules
Because nobody can define my blackness for me
My blackness is not a checklist
It isn't the music I listen to
It isn't the clothes I wear
It isn't my skin shade
And it most definitely isn't
something I should have to prove
Ruby Bridges
Only six years old
Walking through doors that they
People didn't want her
to walk through
She reminds me

Where I Stand (cont.)

That people can try and make you feel
Misplaced even when you have every right

To be exactly where you are
And there are so many others
People who came before us
And made space when there wasn’t
Any space made for them
We should carry with us
Because I for one know what it feels like
To question where I belong
Why should anyone make people feel like that
Why tell someone that they are not black enough
Why make someone prove that they belong
Instead of deciding who fits in we should make more room
Room for different styles
Different personalities
Different voices
Different ways of being black
Being a part of a community doesn't mean we all must be the same

I’m only 13
And I'm still figuring out who is m
But I already know this
I don't need to be more black
I don't need to be less black need
And I don’t need someone else
To decide whether I'm black enough for their standards
There will be times where I will feel misplaced or not enough
Times where I wonder where I fit
But belonging isn't about
Changing yourself until you fit into somebody else’s space
It is about creating spaces where people
Won’t have to change themselves in the first place
People who have ever felt misplaced were never the piece that didn't fit
They were simply trying to fit into someone else’s picture
Now together we can create a picture where we all belong.

The Heart of Our Community

Victorious Y10

We trace the lines of quiet grace,
In every voice in every space.
Not just the peaks of stoned heights,
But steady keepers of the light.
Shirley Chisholm spoke for our rights
That made everyone see their light

From hands that shaped and hearts that bled,
To paths where hope is daily fed.
We build the block we lift the stone.
No single soul is left alone
Rosa Parks who made her mark,
Is the one who opened people's spark .

The unseen strength the common chord.
A deeper wealth than any hoard
Harriet Tubman who led the crowd,
And made sure our voices were heard aloud

And along with all these powerful women,
Lays some important figures we cannot ignore.
My mother and yours and yours serve as,
Powerful beautiful black woman to us all.

In every name and memory,
We honour the heart of our community

Black is my power, Black is my strength

Leah Y9

Black is power Black is strength
To keep fighting till the end From marches to protests
Still we rise
Faith and resilience is what brought us here today
We carry stories from long ago
Tales of perseverance and courage
Shaping us into the communities we are today

Giving up was never a thought
Striving to achieve the goal of equality was the aim
We are the future
Making our mark
Following in the legacy of our ancestors
Our black excellence shining in everything we do
Being black is powerful
Creating moves in what we do

Black is **My** power Black is **My** strength

My black is beautiful!

Sophia & Edeline Y11

From the diversity of my complexion's tone and the uniqueness
of my structured cheekbones.
My black is beautiful!

The bold hue of my skin
I am a woman who displays courage from within.
My skin colour is the strength of royal pride
I dare not hide.
My black is beautiful!

Because I love myself and the colour that I represent
For it's a symbol of eloquence.
Look at me, there is nothing like my features...
What you see is neither an illusion nor a delusion.
It's a stunning gift of natural beauty from God,
So don't dismiss it.
My black is beautiful!

Black is the colour of power and its prestigious.
It exemplifies confidence and style
Which is a blessing by my ancestors of the Nile.

My black is beautiful!

I am beautiful from the inside out!

From Your Future Self

by Kayann Y13

Dear younger me,

There are things I wish I could tell you, things I hope you never forget, and things I hope you learn to believe about yourself. I hope that, as you grow older, you never allow the world to convince you that you are anything less than what you can become. I hope you never feel the need to shrink yourself to fit into a space that was never designed for you. Most importantly, I hope you remember that being Black is not something you should ever have to apologise for, explain or overcome.

Being Black should never determine the course of what should be a limitless future. It should never dictate where you should go or what you should do in your life. Being Black does not confine you to the narrow space of Britain's idea of a Black person. A stereotype should not hold you back from what you **CAN** do. And yet, for millions of Black people around the world, that is their reality.

In the last 500 years, we have seen progress, whether great or small, and it is not for me to decide. This progress has allowed Black people to be themselves, and not an object that the white man can buy. We have been given educational opportunities and a chance for a future, something I will never undermine.

But, younger me, I want you to understand something. The opportunities we have today did not simply appear. They exist because people before us fought for them, sacrificed for them and dared to imagine a world that they might never live to see. They challenged the world they were born into so that we could have the chance to change the world we live in. And that is why we honour our community. We honour those who came before us, those who stood up when it was easier to remain silent, and those who continued to believe in a better future when the world gave them every reason not to.

But honouring our community is not just about looking backwards. It is about recognising what we have inherited and deciding what we will do with it. It is about understanding that the progress made before us is not the end of our responsibility, but the beginning of ours.

If all my generation can do is
make even the smallest amount of progress, then let's do it. Let's bring forward the progress. Let's add to what our ancestors started. Let's use our voices to improve our place in society so that the next generation can do better, so that they can live in a better world.

We are not going to win this struggle today, nor tomorrow. This is a process that has taken us over 500 years to get to where we are now. Progress is different from equality. Too many Black people are being racially targeted and abused. Too many people still have to hear passive-aggressive comments. Around 35% of the world's population is Black, and an estimated 70% of those Black people are victims of racist abuse, both verbally and physically.

And I know, younger me, that it can be exhausting. It can be frustrating to watch the world change and still see the same injustices repeated. It can be difficult to celebrate how far we have come when there is still so far to go. But I want you to remember that our history is not only a history of suffering. It is a history of resilience, creativity, courage, community and love. We are not defined solely by what was done to us, but also by everything we have continued to create, achieve and become.

We are impatient for change. We see the injustices every day, but we also see something else: we see a community being built to fight the hate.
We should not have to protest because white people treat us unfairly. We do this because we need to fight for the same rights that they already have.

Our colour is not a curse. Being Black is not something we get to choose, but it is something we get to cherish. Our softness is not a liability. Our light does not need permission to shine. We belong in every room we walk into.

And to everyone listening, I hope you take these words as a reminder, too. You do not have to wait until the world recognises your worth before you recognise it yourself. You do not have to become someone else to deserve opportunities. And you do not have to carry every struggle alone.

Our community is not built solely by the people whose names appear in history books. It is built by the people who encourage us when we doubt ourselves, who create opportunities for others, who speak up when something is wrong and who remind us of our worth when we have forgotten it. It is built by us; in the choices we make every day.

So, when we honour our community this Black History Month, let us remember why that honour matters. Let us remember the people who made our progress possible, the people who continue to fight for equality, and the people who will carry that responsibility into the future. Let us honour them not only with our words, but with our actions.

And, younger me, as you continue through life, never let the limitations other people place on you become the limitations you place on yourself.

Think big. Think of experiences, and don't be afraid of experiences that teach you. And don't ever forget that being Black is an honour as you strive for greatness.

With love, pride and a reminder to never forget who you are,

Your future self.

Black is Suicide

by Bethel Y12

You might be wondering to yourself, why is the title so vulgar,
most of you sitting here are probably in the mood for some laughter.
And isn't this a time of celebration?
This is true,
and sometimes i wish I could just talk to you, talk to you about how much i love my life as a young, black woman,
but unfortunately, I can't always be motivational, I'm only human.
So, I am about to tell you why being born black, is suicide.

Physical.
'I can't breathe', These
were the last words of a father,
George Floyd, before he was suffocated
in the streets of the city he raised his baby girl.
He layed on the cold ground,
his neck pushed down, until his soul was lost
whilst someone else's son belittled, degraded, and murdered him at no cost.

9 minutes and 29 seconds he couldn't take a deep breath,
his last minutes weren't full of memories, reminiscence, joy, only death.
Every single second his body lost its will,
every second his life, and his story faded away
until George Floyd lay still.

His murderer was Derek Chauvin.
In his first trial, Chauvin pleaded not guilty to the murder of Floyd.
He was found guilty on all 3 counts, which I am going to list out for you.
Unintentional second degree murder, Third degree murder, and Second degree manslaughter.
This charge essentially told the jury,
"Whether Chauvin intentionally killed this man or not is irrelevant, he assaulted him and that assault killed him, therefore he is guilty of murder".
A strangely twisted way of putting things don't you agree?

The system will continue to fight us everyday, rather than protect us,
they label us criminals and send the real ones away,
they make us pay, pay for their mistakes,
and I could continue to speak to you about the 250 black deaths per year in the United States, caused by law enforcement,
but I'm running on a time limit,
so let me sum this up.

Derek Chauvin was not one of Floyd's dealers, not one of his ex- homeboys,
not one of his own,
not an enemy from home,
but a man who screams tales of justice.
From your attendance to this event,
I think all of you sitting here know
there is no concept of justice in a mind like his.

Emotional: I'm trapped in mental distortion,
I am black, so my words are passed with caution;
i can't control my tears,
im swallowing my fears, it's been years.
Years of war, survival of the fittest,
biting off necks as if we're vultures,
where is the love?
Can't we just care for each-other?
this not our culture.

But yet, I wake up every morning with my head held high,
I'm willing to try,
try to hold in my tears when my hair doesn't slick right,
when my concealer shade comes out too light.

I hear the sizzle of the iron as it penetrates my hair,
the curls I grew up so afraid to share,
in my head play the voices of a hundred demons,
whilst i cry at my reflection in the mirror glare.
i am afraid to walk into school each day,
afraid of what they might say,
wondering why i had to be created this way.

I bear the weight of a thousand people's,
my black is not something i chose,
but I fight to make it something i cherish.
the crowd only laughs when i make the joke, throw the punch line,
they are silent when i share my knowledge, when i tell them i can be right,
that my facts aren't opinions,
they're facts.

they don't believe me when i tell them the homework,
if i say it's left, not right they just smirk.
my blackness is what enables them to cause me pain,
my Afro is their excuse to push me out of their lane,
I am not a part of their world,
my skin is not green, but to them i am still an alien.
Too depressing?
This is what it's truly like being black,

Escape is not an option,
our lives are built around their faults,
brick by brick it's our duty to fix their own corruption.
Again, my blackness is not my choice,
they can shut me out,
tell me i belong in the dark,
but all of you sitting here know that's not my identity,
that I won't let their prejudice diminish me.

That's who I am, that's who all of us are. Humans. We are humans with a purpose.
Black, white, blue, green,
who actually cares?
Some of us create change,
some of us stay in this cycle for infinity,
a broken soul in a cage.
I am born black, it is who I am meant to be, there are not other options for me,
so I cannot just accept it, I must embrace it.

I must smile as I twirl my finger and the coils on my head bounce into place.
I must feel the sun radiate off my skin, breaking off into shards of light, and trickling down the contours of my face.
I must perform in the schools Black History Month Showcase.
I must shut them out when they try to put me in my place.

Malcom X himself stated 'Who taught you to hate the texture of your hair- who taught you to hate yourselves from the top of your head to the souls of your feet.'

What I know is,
whoever taught you these things,
hates themself.
So why must we loathe the blackness that makes us vibrant.
That makes us move at the sound of a melody. That makes us intellectual, politically aware. That makes us natural singers, dancers, lawyers, doctors, models, writers.

Why must we hate the thing about us that makes us loveable,
that makes us a community,
that finishes the puzzle.
The answer is, we shouldn't,
and I know I won't.
Like I said,
being black is suicide,
but I'm sure as hell set on making it my living.

Music is our Foundation

by Eden & Shayla Y11

They say music brings us together, but do they hear us when we speak?

Do they hear the strength behind our voices, or only the stories they expect to see?

Music is more than something we hear. It is our history. Our culture. The reason our stories still remain here.

It carries our struggles, our laughter, our pain, and reminds us that no matter where we go, our roots still remain.

Before the stages, before the speakers, before the charts and the fame, there was a voice. A voice that wasn't always heard.

So we sang. We played. We created.

And what began as a voice became a movement.

Everyone loves a different genre of music, but every sound has a story. Every sound has a meaning.

From a soothing melody to a rhythm that makes you move, Black music is our history, our rhythm, our groove.

Before the world heard our music, our voices could be heard together. In churches. In communities. In moments of struggle.

Gospel gave us a voice when times were hard, turning pain into praise, fear into faith, and struggle into strength.

Because sometimes you don't need to have all the answers. Sometimes you just need a song that reminds you to keep going.

Then came Jazz.

A saxophone speaks when words aren't enough. A trumpet answers. And somewhere between the rhythm and the melody, creativity comes alive.

Louis Armstrong showed the world what Jazz could be: a genre full of soul, rhythm, and freedom to create.

Jazz wasn't just something to listen to. It was something to feel.

And then there is Soul. Not just a genre, but a feeling.

A voice that doesn't simply reach your ears, it reaches something deeper.

R&B brings romance, passion and emotion. Smooth vocals, heartfelt melodies, feelings that don't always need to be spoken.

Because sometimes music says what our mouths cannot. It can comfort us, move us, and stay with us.

Then reggae flows in, with a rhythm so peaceful, yet so powerful.

Offbeat guitars, bass in harmony, and a message that travels further than the music itself.

Freedom. Justice. Unity.

Music becomes more than sound. It becomes community, a rhythm that brings us together.

And we inherited these rhythms before we even knew their names.

We heard them in our homes, in our headphones, at parties, in the car, and in our families.

We grew up surrounded by sounds created by people who turned their experiences into something the world could hear.

And now, we carry it forward.

Because Black music isn't only about the past. It's about us.

It's about where we've come from, where we are, and where we're going.

Music carries our history. It carries our culture. It carries our voices.

From Gospel to Jazz, from Soul to R&B, from reggae to the music we create today, from the voices before us to the voices standing here today, we don't just listen to the music.

We are part of its story.

Because music is more than sound. It is memory. It is strength. It is identity. It is connection.

It is us.

And the voices before us gave us something to carry, so we don't let them fade.

We carry the rhythm.

Music is our foundation.

IC3

Okuolise Y13

Growing up I was always told,
Im just a young black yute what would I know,
And I'll be honest they're right, somethings I just don't know.
Don't know how to do taxes, don't know what its like clocking into a 9 to 5 after a school run
or apparently how many times per sentence I say wagwan,
But i cant lie man, fairs yeah I hear it still,
And thats the only words i really know to show how I feel,
Words to just be honest, understanding, to feign being real.
But thats just what I grew up around, I gotta get with it
Cause if I aint with it, I guess I'm gonna have to code switch it - and that aint me
So really, I guess I just gotta conform
Even though where I'm from its hard for men to come forward
About they're mental.
Cause they'll tell you,
Move man, you just gotta learn to take a joke.
Boohoo man, like im online shopping for clothes.
Then when you speak up 'bout mental health, they'll be all "well who knew man"
We aint have a clue, bro you gotta read the room man,
So I guess as long as its all bants then you're just begging it too man.
So I guess sometimes you just gotta let them do them and you just do you, man

But, I'm just a young black boy, what would I know
Cant sit here allowed to speak on some things, i guess i might know.
Like I might know some broken dreams, broken esteem, cant work with this system because that's broken
But boy better know I'd be damned if I'm broke.

Cos how'm I s'posed to get my CLA?
Pull up at the motive show all the girls cause, you know "we're laive in lei!"
Mum said shes gonna get me a honda, man she better forget it
Mummy just how exactly will that suit my aesthetic?
What am i gonna post on socials, show the world, see money? Mhm, I get it.
Although my bank balance is negative and i cant pay off my credit.
I guess one way or another I'm gonna learn me a lesson
That its not everyday, jambazz, chop life.

And of course theres nothing wrong with wanting the soft life
But its deffo something there not to be idolised,
We prioritize frivolous things, gold and diamond rings,
Perception of money and so much materialism.
Cos if it isnt a benz then i ain't gonna whip it
And if it aint got a tick, im definitely not kickin it
But at some point we have to stop turning to the superficial to give us clarity
Cos all that glitters is not gold,
And all gold is not reality.

But again what do I know I'm just a young black teen
Maybe I'm starting to know a tiny bit what it means-
-to go from the streets of naij to shepherds bush green
to laugh, to live, to love, to dream, to smile, to succeed
I know a bit, about what it means to live in communities
where black people can flourish and be
yeah cos we flourish indeed
But I also know the internal conflict thats inbetween
And i know that its just not what we need
Yeah i know,
Most of the time its like its us vs the world
Vs the bias, and the powers putting our people in cells
Lack of opportunity how're our children s'posed to prevail
But sometimes its like its us vs ourselves.
Look,
If its one thing I know, its that we're better together.
I know, you can call me corny but you cant call me a liar though.
Cos you aint heard the thunder go without the flash of the lightning,
Just like you aint seen good black men without even greater black woman behind them.

And that means miss me with all that "as a man" n "as a male" talk,
The whole, "my girl has to cook", whole time hes never even had a girl talk.
All that online talk, ragebaiting for likes and clicks,
Saying things like "was my man beggin it?" and "is it masculine for girls to eat chicken and chips?" (ridiculous)
The complexion talk,
Unrealistic standard talk,
Diaspora talk,
Even "whos jollofs better?" talk.
Bully talk,
Angry black women talk,
The "as you should talk",
Because real talk, we're done with that talk,
Lets get some new talk.

Although I'd be lying if i said i dont like a plantain convo
But some of them are just agents for spreading more harmful rhetoric
And Im not talking about the guys that got vex cos i aint say plantIN
Im talking about those that refuse to water the seeds that we're planting
In our community
Yeah yeah im talking about you AND me.
You really thought that you could get off scot-free? Nah
Because as long as we dont invest in our community then we just like wont heal
Then sit here wondering why the CIA stays up like 4-0

So yeah, im just a young black man- what DO I know?
Well I know, about what it means to be black today
I know the both sides of a smile and thats word to Santan Dave
And I know you gotta love yours, and thats word to Jermaine
I know, how it feels to have passion that burns more than most
To try envision a version of earth where theres more room for more personal growth
Truth be told, its the crooked turns the black journey provokes
Like when they diminish your worth then make it your burden to hold
Your burden to grow
I know, its now up to us to promote
Systems that show that' its not to late to start making a fix
I know, it'll spark the betterment of the life of black kids,
I know its hard, I know its not really on us to permit
I know, I might be green, immature if you deem it
Cause I'm an IC3 but I'm telling you what I see fit
So don't think your struggle could ever leave in the shadows
Cause though im just a young black brit,
Trust me,
I know.

They Tried to Erase Us

by Hannah Y9

They tried to erase us
There is a page missing from the history book
Not torn out
Not burnt
Missing
Because somebody decided
That our story wasn't worth telling

They tried to silence us
"I have a dream,"
Living in a nightmare
"Black Lives Matter."
Not everyone seems to think so
Warriors of their time
Glorified in the past
But forgotten in the future

They tried to stop us
We found a way
We weren't just the poor souls abused in the past
We danced
We trudged
We laughed
We cried
We fought for what everyone knew was right
For what *is* right
But some people just can't seem to accept that

They tried to forget us
We'll keep fighting to be remembered
They can try to erase the stain of the past
But they can't rewrite our memories
We know what our ancestors achieved
They know what our ancestors achieved
We all know what we're still trying to achieve
And it terrifies them to witness our rise

They're trying to fight us
We're still here
Locked in an unbreakable chain
Those who may have left us
Are still standing by our side
They will strike and attack
They won't stop until they've won
They're going to be fighting forever
Not us
We will strike and attack
We won't stop until we've won
We're all fighting with the knowledge of what is right
And they're using a tainted sword

One day they will clash
The shield of endless lies
Denial
Injustice
The sword of hidden truth
We all know what that is
So many have fought
So many have spoken
They've made their mark on this futile battle
A mark that is bleeding
The final eclipse that will rewrite the world

They're still trying to silence us
We won't hide our voices
They're still trying to stop us
We won't give in
They're still trying to forget us
We will always be remembered
They're still trying to fight us
We will win the battle

They're still trying to erase us
Our ink has already bled through the page