



Inhale, Exhale 9:29

BY LAPRINCESS BREWER, MD, MPH

I want to inhale and exhale
 Not with permission but by God's grace; is that too out of place?
 I want to inhale and exhale
 Not that contaminated air or while on the ground in despair.
 I want to inhale and exhale
 Not compromised or by having to disguise.
 I want to inhale and exhale
 My dreams and aspirations beyond just conversations.
 Someday I'll breathe; if not me, maybe our posterity.

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Author's note

The tragic deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery have forced our country to take its own empathy pulse. As a cardiologist, health equity researcher and community advocate, I have had a plethora of emotions, including exhaustion, devastation and angst.

I have had an even greater heaviness on my heart since the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. This was so close to home in a thriving area that I am very familiar with and one that my patients, community partners and friends live and work in.

To channel my own grief, this poem poured out of me as I turned off the news and cut off

social media. I pray that it may be a source of healing not only for myself and medical community colleagues but also for the patients and community I serve as well as for the families of those who have lost loved ones from senseless acts of racial violence and from COVID-19. I hope that it may give a voice to the voiceless and marginalized. I hope this poem can serve as a source of deep reflection for us all to use this moment as a turning point to come out better on the other side. The poem is purposefully brief and set at nine lines, each line representing a minute, approximately totaling the amount of time George Floyd suffered. MM