

Black Lives Matter Collective Poem

The following poem was co-created by the attendees of the Juneteenth Vigil held in 2020. Responses to the prompt: "In a world where Black lives matter..." were shared through the chat function, which JLC members Kali Skodack and Chevon Stewart later compiled.

In a world where Black lives matter...

I imagine Black lives would matter every day, every minute, every second.

I imagine beauty, listening, and Black people feeling unafraid.

I imagine more trust, laughter, and joy.

There would be celebration of black joy while Black trans women are able to live joyously and freely.

I imagine Black economic freedom, unobstructed ingenuity and art, and a place where Black excellence is celebrated.

Every Black person will be able in joy and safety to let their imagination unfold boundlessly and free and their contributions are appreciated.

I imagine Black people's finances robust and substantial.

I imagine being accepted for who I am regardless of my skin color.

Black voices and experiences would be heard.

Equity is a given.

In a world where Black lives matter, Black skin is celebrated, welcomed, and never feared.

I imagine no Black family will even need to have "The Talk" with their Black children.

I imagine mothers of Black children feel that their children are safe to play outside.

Black mothers will not have to feel the grip and clutch of fear when they think of their children navigating the world.

Mothers would not have to pull their child aside and teach them fear.

People would live in a society that met their needs with kindness rather than churlishness, cruelty, and killing.

There is freedom, justice and equity.

In a world where Black Lives Matter, I Imagine white women won't clutch their purses a little tighter when a Black person walks by, nor will a homeowner reach for their gun when a Black runner jogs by.

I imagine a world in which Black people don't have to live in perpetual fear, sorrow, and exhaustion from the day in and day out oppression.

People of color won't be viewed as threats, but rather as people.

There would be no fear of one's actions based on the color of one's skin.

I imagine that white women will not weaponize their femininity to destroy Black lives.

Our patriarchal and capitalist society will be replaced by a more humane and affirmative world.

There would truly be liberty and justice for all and White privilege would no longer exist.

In a world where Black Lives Matter, I aspire to the status of an ally, while only Black lives can determine.

In a world where Black Lives matter, the truth of history will be taught to ALL children.
Education tells the truth.
I imagine our research methodologies are decolonized. Our syllabi reflect a broad range of voices and ways of knowing.
The literary canon that our children learn is filled with names like Morrison, Hurston, Smith, Coates, and more.
Black voices will be sought after to tell the history of America.
History is taught and captured accurately and black lives are not defined, constrained, or refined by anyone but each individual.
I imagine representation to actually be representative of the population, especially in government, and to include schools.
Black lives are valued, represented, protected, rewarded, and achieving success.
Racism would be brought out from its sometimes unconscious and unwitting hiding places, and in doing so it may wither away.

In a world where black lives matter, there will be representation all around.
My boss will be Black.
Racists would not be elected to office...
We would have a Black woman for president.
I imagine equal representation and equity throughout the entire educational system.
There would be greater visibility of African Americans in the environmental community. We will know all the names of the environmental advocates of color, not just those who are white.
Black people would feel safe in the world filling positions of power leadership and education.
Positions of leadership and power would be filled by people who don't look like me... and my white privilege is in the minority always.
We would see many CEOs of color, filling influential positions as heads of all sectors and filling many seats on boards.
I imagine that my neighbor is black. We sit together, laughing, sharing fruit from our trees, content, knowing we have the same opportunities.

In a world where Black lives matter, I imagine that, as Dr. King imagined, Black people "will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."
Laws wouldn't be written to subjugate Black people and wouldn't be enforced differently to do the same.
Safety would live inside and outside Black bodies.
Historical trauma would be acknowledged and we would support access to those who experienced it.
Whites would engage in reparations for the damage they have done to Black people for years.
I imagine whites would show their gratitude and humility in recognition of the ways Black people enrich our experience and our wellbeing.
In this world I imagine healing, recognition, understanding, and support.

In a world where Black lives matter, Black people are seen, heard, and are leaders in schools and companies.

I imagine the truth of our history being spoken and lessons learned will NOT be repeated.

There is equal access to healthcare, food, education, and employment.

I imagine Black mothers having a safe birthing experience in the USA.

A diversity of opinions would be embraced, heard, and valued while creativity and strength take root... unobstructed.

I imagine health and wellbeing for Black families.

In a world where Black lives matter, Black families wouldn't have to live as if our country was at war with them.

The justice system would no longer allow abuses of power against black people to be tolerated. Perpetrators are held accountable individually and collectively for their actions.

The prison doors would open and all those held unjustly would be freed, not just in words, but indeed would be compensated, would truly live.

Wrongful convictions of innocent people would not exist.

There would be dismissal of the stereotypes that run deep in the subconscious of our collective communities around the world.

In this world, I imagine the evolution of humanity in our society because Black lives no longer have to expend the daily energy to stay alive and demand equality.

We would prioritize restorative and transformative justice over punishment.

The past will not be forgotten when reparations are still due.

In a world where Black lives matter, I imagine children growing up knowing love instead of fear.

I imagine Black babies having the opportunity to become our Leaders and Elders.

I imagine my Black students thriving in existence; their contributions vigen honor and their inclusion in all aspects of society is both equitable and just.

No child would be taught by society to be selective in their empathy.

I imagine the highest quality of education existing for every child regardless of zip code, economic status, or skin color.

Young Black Vermonters would start off their summer vacation swimming and not teaching their white communities about the need to confront their own racism.

Children can grow up and not be self-conscious about who they are or take their beauty for granted.

The media, school demographics, and friend groups would reflect the diverse culture present in this country.

In a world where Black lives matter, I imagine a decolonized country and globe.

We would value the paths, futures, relationships, hearts, souls, and bodies of Black Indigenous and People of color.

Such a world is a decolonized world.

Economic systems would prioritise people over property.

Social systems would prioritize people over property.

Medical systems would prioritize people over property.

Mental health would systems prioritize people over property.
School systems would prioritize people over property.
Restitution systems would prioritize people over poverty.
What a decolonized world.

In a world where Black Lives Matter, Black joy would be celebrated.
Everywhere. All the Time. Daily.
Black history month would be year-round.
Black people would feel surrounded by others of all ethnicities who celebrate them...Who are grateful for who they are.
Queer and trans women and men of color would be celebrated, seen for who they are, and would be truly safe.
I will not be afraid to cry for my Black brothers and sisters in the LGBTQIA+ community.
We will see, recognize, and respect individuals as we see, recognize, and respect ourselves.
I imagine a decolonized land where black, brown, and indigenous bodies are celebrated and legacies are TRULY truly honored.

In a world where Black lives matter, we climb the mountain of injustice together, wherever it presents itself, as one people.
I imagine people will listen the first time around and listening will be paired with action.
We will look at the content of our character, locally, regionally, nationally, and globally.
Justice will be restorative and equitable.
White allies will step up in all seasons and under all circumstances.
I'll burn it down too.
I'm sorry I have disappointed in the past, a past where your black body seemed secondary to my security.
But I'm here. I'm ready. Take your time in trusting me.
I don't need it; here's the match, watch me while I run ahead and burn it down.

In a world where Black lives matter, I imagine us having a very different conversation.
We would be having conversations of celebration and not vigils.
There would be no more names to say for all the wrong reasons.
No more extrajudicial executions and other killings.
I imagine that fear and power-over dissolve and when we walk down the street we ask how are you, we stop to hear the answer, and take the time to find the solution- for all, for black, brown, indigenous, not just those deemed "in power".
I imagine not being afraid of what would happen if my younger brother or my father were to be pulled over... I imagine not having the images in my head of the worst that could happen to them.
I imagine no more killings.
I imagine brown feet on the earth, skin feeling the breeze and warm sun, and security of hands to hold.
We will walk our talk.

In a world where Black Lives matter, Black Lives Will Matter.