

Not Your PROP[erty]

Welcome to The Black Box News.

I'm Cyrah Ward.

...

TBB News is a platform rooted in challenging the traditional functions of the black box in American Society and its interdependence on stereotypes to survive. I seek to dismantle racially influenced restrictions of the assimilated mind or what I call "box-like thinking". Through research triggered by my experiences as a black woman and performing artist I welcome you to a journey of busting the box.

Today's segment will be candid as I find words for recent unexplainable events.

...

(Theme music plays)

"Your piercing gaze.
Makes my blood boil.
I feel so out of place."

...

The Black Box News is a space for me to share my views in a way that I have not quite had the courage to do before. I call it calculated clap back because as a Black woman going on the fly poses the possibility of allowing someone to think they can find holes in my argument no matter if my views are rooted in my own experience of racism backed by countless historical facts.

But this time around, my mind is simply unable to calculate properly. As I sat down bracing myself to watch the video of Jacob Blake I found myself in avoidance behavior. Finding everything else to do evading the emotions of defeat, sadness, and disappointment at the fact that I even believed for a moment that there was any hope left.

As I sat at my computer reading several news reports I couldn't help but notice the irony these white reporters embodied as they closed out their stories with their head shots smiling at the bottom of their well written article. How reminiscent it is of the smiles seen in lynching photos sold on postcards as propaganda for white supremist and death notes when exposed to the gaze of anyone whose skin consumes the beauties of the sun.

I can't help but notice the movie like voice over narrations that cloak the news reporting videos of Jacob Blake like a costume contoured specifically for this production. It's as if they are announcing the next best movie coming this fall. And with hopes of reaching high box office ticket sales they make several trailers just to heighten ones desire to see what happens next. But as a creator, I sat back and wondered who exactly placed these clips together. To be degraded to some news station's B-roll is dehumanizing and unsettling to say the least – yet all too familiar. Belittling such tragic events to grainy freeze frames of a black man's run in with death; I can only imagine the amount of times the clip had to be paused and replayed and paused again just to achieve cinematic perfection.

(sighs) Hearing 7 shots I am offended at this officer subconscious effort to use such a religious number of completion to sign off his horrendous acts. And yet I can't help but wonder what new pain has been created for many generations to come. Each shot rang like a skipping rock slicing the air with every purpose of creating ripple effects of emotional and mental trauma set to send a warning to anybody who thought they graduated to being anything but his property.

Putting myself in Jacob Blake's shoes I can't help but defiantly say "How dare you yank at my collar as if I'm a dog to be trained on how not to jerk the chain when going for a walk.

I am at a loss for words and yet I still have to say something!

I wonder what it's like to be amongst the crowd. What would I have done? What would I have said, yelled, screamed, hollered or pleaded? If possible would I have become a human shield and mustered up the courage to risk my own life? Or would I wrestle with my fight, flight, or freeze reflexes ultimately just to fall victim to a physical paralysis as a result of an overdosed exposure to all three survival tactics at once.

What would I have done? I want to think that I would have done what was needed to create a new ripple effect in history. But the reality is, I have to be honest and say that I probably would have had traumatic flash backs of my own. Flash backs that would play in my eyes as they sat wide open unable to see the live stream currently happening in front of me. Blinded by all the times I thought I prevailed but stored my run ins with white supremist as training videos on how to assimilate quickly and survive, just praying to see another day.

I'm reminded of the 6 foot 3 white man who stood over me as I took out the trash at the end of my shift at a daycare in Red Hook, Brooklyn, New York. I was David and he was Goliath except there was no sling shot in sight. While Staring into my eyes with cut throat seriousness as if he was my maker and I his help, he suffocated me with an eerie silence after he assaulted my personal spaces declaring it was my job to sort every single piece of trash I thought I disposed of correctly. I'm reminded of the anxiety attack that lasted 5 hours after my encounter as I tried to stop my body from shaking because this white man seemed as if he was going to put his hands on me and force my hands into the trash— a place he clearly thought I belonged. Or the time I was yelled at to go back to Africa through dorm room windows, at The Ohio State University, as I stood in protest of the normalization of Black death. Or the time a cop quickly laced his hands around his gun while yelling "get back in the car", simply because I tried to hop out of the car in standstill traffic just to go to the OSU football game— something I saw my white colleges do in the car directly in front of me.

Again, (sighs) I ask myself if given the chance what would I have done to make this situation any different from before? But the honest question is could I have done anything as my memories intruded as reminders on how to act when around threatening white authority? The answer is no. I would have done nothing. I probably would have been emotionally and physically able to do nothing as I sat there downloading another training video on how to be a good nigga and attempt to survive White America.

I don't have the answers and refuse to fake the narrative that I, Cyrah Ward, could play Black Super Woman now or ever.

All I have are my words.

And so I use them to challenge you.

What are you doing to protect the lives of Black people and our babies that are watching?

Now I want you to ask yourself

Have you checked outside the box?

...

(Theme music plays)

“Cause I'm not hidin anymore.
See I have got a reason to be.”

...

Thank you so much for listening. Our Vibes is a song called The Table provided by April+Vista. Ant Today's episode was sponsored by Lyndsey Vader. Thank you so much Lyndsey for your financial support. If you feelin so called, go ahead and let the Lord use you— support TBB News by taping the links in my description.

...

(Theme music plays)

“And though you keep me
From the table
When company comes knockin
One things for sure...”

...

As I close out this week's episode I want to make clear that I understand my responsibility to report facts as accurately as possible. That said, as I began to edit my recordings I realized that my free write rested in my belief that Jacob Black had his collar snatched when indeed it was his shirt tail. At first I began to rerecord certain parts of the episode but decided that by doing so I would rid myself of the opportunity to make this important point. Black people will never see and experience Black death in the same way as those who live outside of the Black struggle. When I tried watching the video I honestly ran from it at the last minute because I simply couldn't stomach another death. However, my eyes played flash backs of trauma well before my free write found the words to express how I internalize Black death.

I say all this to say. Sharing Black death is to actively be okay with retraumatizing Black people.

I ask that you simply be mindful of your intent vs your impact.

I'm Cyrah Ward

Artist | Black Woman | Griot

Y'all stay safe now.

...

(Theme music plays)

"And I'm gone keep on movin movin shakin.

You won't ever get ahold of me.

And though you keep me

From the table

When company comes, knockin

One things for sure

There is nothing you can do to starve my soul

No no no no no no."

(Music fades out)