

## I CAN'T BREATHE

Inside the glass

a young man says his last goodbye,  
a phone call to his mother, vigiling outside,  
a cough and a sneeze now a pandemic disease,  
soon he is whispering, *I can't breathe*—  
isolated and trapped by a ventilator machine,  
a masked nurse holds his hand to ease his pain  
until he dies.

Outside the glass

a mother says her last goodbye,  
a phone call to her ailing son inside,  
eyes burning and red, tears clogging her throat,  
grieving uncontrollably, *I can't breathe*,  
no one consoling or hearing her cry  
masked ones walk by as she watches intently  
his final sigh.

Inside the glass

a black man says his last goodbye,  
a video recording to witnesses outside  
arrest and handcuffing, then a racism disease,  
soon he is choking, *I can't breathe (12 times)*  
face pinned to the street, neck kneed, lynched by white police  
while masked witnesses shout for relief  
until he dies.

Outside the glass

Mothers say their last goodbye,  
a viral video to the public outside,  
eyes burning with anger and hearts in their throat,  
screaming loudly, *I can't breathe*,  
400 years, violently oppressed by white supremacy law and vigilantes,  
while masked protestors demonstrate for justice  
as cities burn and die.

Inside the glass

creatures lament—will it be their last goodbye—  
media and marches to the world beside,  
eyes burning, throats choking from polluting,  
and protesting loudly, *I can't breathe*,  
Life exploited by legal and corporate greed,  
masks hiding climate change extinctioning  
as communities die.

Outside the glass

Pachamama mourns—will it be her last goodbye—  
warnings to humanity collapsing inside,  
land, water and air depleting, eyes and throat parching,  
pleading desperately to all species, *I can't breathe*,  
strangling pandemics of hatred and greed,  
praying to unmask love, courage and empathy,  
so Mother Earth and all may thrive.

ejhs

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