

FREE-ISH

An Original Poem By KaNikki Jakarta,
The First Black Poet Laureate of Alexandria, Virginia (July 20, 2020)

The definition of Free is
Not under the control or in the power of another;
Able to act or be done as one wishes

I am one who wishes that were true for black folks
It's a cruel joke
to say that we are indeed free
"on the loose
at liberty
unconfined
unbound"
when I keep seeing images of black people on the ground
handcuffed
knee on throat
being choked
they've put down the ropes
but they still have the chains
Hashtag
"Say her name; say his name"
It's a shame
That we have video footage
with who is to blame
But they walk free
no responsibility
for their actions
A main attraction
on a murder video
a side show...
We're *still* waiting for a "change gon' come"
Already been 155 years
and we're still in tears!
and we're called "free"
I disagree
The definition of Free means
without cost of payment
Tell that to the black man on the pavement
Who paid his life screaming, "I can't breathe!"
Tell that to all of the ancestors who were strange fruit on trees
It's hard to believe
Free means released from slavery, confinement, or captivity
But black boys have no guarantee to reach puberty
But let us just say we all live until we die naturally

We still have to deal with
Systemic Racism and Redlining
With people defining
black neighborhoods undesirable with mark of a pen
and these maps have been a trend
to block Black People from private and public investments
in an attempt to prevent them from purchasing a home
But when they buy regardless of this; they have a high interest loan
And it has been this way for decades
these are more ways
to keep Black People enslaved
Today,
For every one hundred dollars of wealth
held by a White family
Black families have five dollars and four cents
This is the evidence
that “Land of the Brave, Home of the Free” means
Brave for Black Folks that survived slavery
Free for White Folks
who can truly live free definitions
But free-ish for black folks under systemic racism conditions
The killing the Black Race is some people’s mission
This may be difficult to believe
But Eric Garner and George Floyd were pleading, “I can’t breathe”
Let’s just tell the truth
racist police officers and racist white people are killing our youth
Ahmaud Arbery could not freely jog down the street
Trayvon Martin could not freely walk down his street
and Breonna Taylor was shot in her home when she was just trying to sleep

Black People’s mission now
is to survive
Stay alive

But we’re not free...
We’ve been Free-ish
Since 1865