

“Americans, You Live in a Police State: It’s time to wake up, and come to terms with this reality.”

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I haven’t been able to stop thinking about Elijah McClain. I haven’t been able to stop thinking about the fact that a 23 year old, 140 pound, unarmed Black man who enjoyed playing the violin for shelter cats in his spare time was evidently such a threat to the police who stopped him on his walk home that they needed to put him in a choke hold, have him injected by a Medic with 500 milligrams of a horse tranquilizer even after he’s been robbed of his consciousness, resulting in two heart attacks and his death.

Like so many others before him, he pleaded for the state to let him breathe. Like so many others before him, we now know his last words as he begged for his life. As the cops were robbing his brain of oxygen, he cried:

“I can’t breathe. I have my ID right here. My name is Elijah McClain. That’s my house. I was just going home. I’m an introvert. I’m just different. That’s all. I’m so sorry. I have no gun. I don’t do that stuff. I don’t do any fighting. Why are you attacking me? I don’t even kill flies! I don’t eat meat! But I don’t judge people, I don’t judge people who do eat meat. Forgive me. All I was trying to do was become better. I will do it. I will do anything. Sacrifice my identity, I’ll do it. You all are phenomenal. You are beautiful and I love you. Try to forgive me. I’m a mood Gemini. I’m sorry. I’m so sorry. Ow, that really hurt. You are all very strong. Teamwork makes the dream work. Oh, I’m sorry I wasn’t trying to do that. I just can’t breathe correctly.”

Before this incident occurred, he “committed the crime” of wearing a ski mask, telling the officers he had the right to go where he was going, and allegedly saying he was taking his power back when they agitated him. Evidently in the eyes of the state, that was enough justification to rob him of his life.

Just imagine if it had been a trained mental health professional who had been sent to approach him instead. As a four-foot-eleven 98-pound nursing assistant working in a nursing home, I can say with confidence that I do a better job of de-escalating a situation than a significant portion of cops across the country do, and I know I’m far from the only one.

It’s about time for us as Americans to acknowledge and accept the fact that we live in a police state. How can we say otherwise when the New York City Police Department has a fiscal budget of \$5.6 billion while at the same time [New York Governor] Andrew Cuomo cut \$8.2 billion in localities? How can we say otherwise when the Aurora Police Department rolled right through and broke up the Violin vigil for Elijah McClain, the young man they murdered. A young man who was so distressed due to the interaction

he was having with them that he began to vomit before losing consciousness, and apologized for doing so. What else are we supposed to call it when Los Angeles SCHOOL police were able to purchase grenade launchers and armored vehicles?

Even in the midst of all of these near constant reminders of the brutality people continue to experience at the hands of the state, a significant number of the masses seem to be satisfied by some toppled statues as opposed to taking meaningful action like a general strike. Meanwhile, the officers involved in the murder of Elijah McClain have been reassigned in an effort to protect them, and only one of the cops that shot eight bullets into the sleeping Breonna Taylor has been fired. Still, no one has been charged with her murder.

The largest civil rights movement in history began in recent weeks after the murder of George Floyd by Officer Derek Chauvin of the Minneapolis Police Department. I hope that energy remains persistent until the Police Departments across the nation are dissolved, and replaced with something that actually has the health, safety, and wellbeing of the communities in mind. After virtually every single flaw in our society has been laid bare in recent months by the current crisis', I hope we use this opportunity to demand better.