

# RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

*Poetry*  
Say Their Names

by Joy Martin



IMAGE BY CLAY BANKS, WASHINGTON DC

## Say Their Names

*i 26 February 2012: Trayvon Martin, 17*

**T**rayvon Martin

**R**eturning to his Sanford, Florida, neighborhood

**A**ttempted to eat Skittles and talk on his phone

**Y**outh in full bloom until

**V**igilante stalked him

**O**n suspicion, no crime known—

**N**ot concerned with proof of action or guilt.

**M**atters taken into wrongful hands

**A**rmed in pursuit of this Black teen, the man

**R**eached for his gun,

**T**ook aim, took life, took

**I**nnocence

**N**o standing-ground defense should he claim.

*ii 17 July 2014: Eric Garner, 43*

**E**ric Garner

**R**ose in death for us to chant his name

**I**n Staten Island, New York, and the world,

**C**hoked on suspicion of selling cigarettes.

**G**asping for breath

**A**fter wrestled to the ground by

**R**ace-blinded officer who was

**N**ever prosecuted even though

**E**leven times Eric begged, *I Can't Breathe*.

**R**iots did not erase the stain.

*iii 9 August 2014: Michael Brown, 18*

**M**ichael Brown

**I**n Ferguson, Missouri, off to college next week,

**C**arefree, pushing boundaries, walked down middle of street

**H**eld no gun, posed no threat, nevertheless,

**A**ccording to autopsy, was shot six times when

**E**xcessive force used (his arms reportedly in air)

**L**eft him dead, 4 hours lying uncovered in August heat.

**B**eing brown was his major crime

**R**ace crossing against the riptide

**O**f injustice that pulls too many under

**W**ithout hope that things will change so

**N**o one need fear an unjust death.

*iv* 22 November 2014: Tamir Rice, 12

**T**amir Rice, of Cleveland, Ohio,  
**A**ll of 12 years old  
**M**owed down after calm 9-1-1-caller had said situation  
**I**nvolved probably a juvenile pointing a fake gun.  
**R**obbed of youth, he was

**R**obbed of life  
**I**nstead of living out his dreams.  
**C**ondemned to death without a trial  
**E**rasing justice from the deadly scene.

*v* 4 April 2015: Walter Scott, 50

**W**alter Scott, driving  
**A**lone in North Charleston, South Carolina,  
**L**ost his life due to a defective center stop lamp.  
**T**he officer briefly scuffled with him; why? unknown.  
**E**videntially, he posed no threat.  
**R**unning away, he was

**S**hot in the back five times  
**C**aught by bullets  
**O**pened up to bleed, left to die  
**T**o suffer this predictable loss  
**T**o surrender hope as it bled away.

*vi* 5 July 2016: Alton Sterling, 37

**A**lton Sterling, accused of causing trouble,  
**L**ost his life in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, when  
**T**wo officers responded to a call made from  
**O**utside a convenience store. False accuser  
**N**ot known.

**S**elling homemade CDs while Black  
**T**urned deadly under officer fire.  
**E**ach person of color taught this lesson,  
**R**eferred to euphemistically as justice,  
**L**eaves the world to shout against  
**I**njustice and chant:  
**N**o Justice! No Peace!  
**G**od have mercy on our nation's soul.

*vii 6 July 2016: Philando Castile, 32*

**P**hilando Castile, while  
**H**aving a date with his girlfriend  
**I**n Saint Paul, Minnesota,  
**L**ost his life at  
**A** routine traffic check: told to show license  
**N**o lip offered yet he was shot  
**D**oing as the officer requested,  
**O**utraging viewers of the viral video  
  
**C**aught on girlfriend's camera.  
**A**s he calmly  
**S**tated merely to inform  
**T**hat he had a licensed gun, he  
**I**nevitably  
**L**ost his life for trying to do everything right,  
**E**ager to avoid any misunderstanding.

*viii 18 March 2018: Stephon Clark, 22*

**S**tephon Clark, shot at twenty times,  
**T**ook eight bullets, six in the back, murdered after  
**E**ntering his grandmother's backyard.  
**P**olice hit him in his leg with their first shots.  
**H**e fell face-down on Sacramento, California, soil.  
**O**fficers then fired fifteen additional rounds—  
**N**early five minutes passed without giving care.  
  
**C**oldly, to reduce assumed risk, he was sacrificed.  
**L**ife of this father of two gunned down, though  
**A**rmed only with a cell phone.  
**R**eportedly he had broken some car windows, thus  
**K**illed by policemen who failed to self-identify.

ix 13 March 2020: Breonna Taylor, 26

**B**reonna Taylor was startled out of slumber while  
**R**esting in her bed. Unknown intruders left this  
**E**mergency medical technician eight-times-shot-dead.  
**O**nly 26 years old  
**N**ever to wake again  
**N**ever to hold a lover or child  
**A**s a barrage of twenty bullets flew.

**T**he deadly shooter lost his badge—not for murder tried.  
**A**dministrative leave given to the other two.  
**Y**oung lady, innocent of any crime, slaughtered in  
**L**ouisville, Kentucky, when these plainclothes  
**O**fficers used battering ram, broke door down,  
**R**aided her once-safe home.

x 25 May 2020: George Floyd, 46

**G**eorge Floyd's neck compressed  
**E**ight minutes forty-six seconds  
**O**ut of breath  
**R**ight before their eyes. Now ours.  
**G**hastly act, bystanders pleaded as  
**E**veryone heard him gasp, *I Can't Breathe*.

**F**atal racism  
**L**eft him lying in Minneapolis, Minnesota,  
**O**ne breath short of life.  
**Y**et another person suffocated  
**D**ead, choked at neck, officer's knee the noose.

*xi 18 June 2020: Andres Guardado Pineda, 18*

**A**ndres Guardado Pineda got in a gun's way  
**N**ever to see his 19<sup>th</sup> birthday. Shot  
**D**ead in an alleyway  
**R**iveted with bullets, five times in the back.  
**E**vidence from his system—no drugs, no alcohol.  
**S**urveillance footage destroyed, they say.

**G**ainfully employed as security in  
**U**nincorporated section of Gardena, California,  
**A**t an auto-body shop where,  
**R**eportedly when confronted, he ran  
**D**etermined to live for another day  
**A**nd was gunned down by pursuing deputy.  
**D**ead at the scene rendered.  
**O**n the street, a ghost gun allegedly found nearby.

**P**urportedly, deputies sought to sport inked-tattoo  
**I**nsignias linked to a violent clique  
**N**icknamed, as whistleblower revealed,  
**E**xecutioners—  
**D**eputies accused of "chasing ink" to celebrate  
**A**t "998" parties over drinks.

*xii 31 August 2020: Dijon Kizzee, 29*

**D**ejon Kizzee, chased for alleged bike-code violation,  
**I**nconceivably shot 20 times in the back while running.  
**J**ustification impossible...gun, never pointed, dropped.  
**O**ne known fact, he was riding while Black  
**N**ever again to bike home.

**K**illed in the streets of Los Angeles, California,  
**I**n front of a neighborhood of witnesses.  
**Z**ero rationale for his murder demands  
**Z**ero tolerance of such brutality.  
**E**nough euphemisms. Enough carnage. Enough injustice.  
**E**nough.

*In memory of these and the many other stolen Black lives*



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