

# **A Poetry Collection: Ebony Eyes**

## **Honors Thesis**

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**EBONY EYES**

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**Table of Contents**

**Acknowledgements ..... iii**  
**Artist Statement .....1**  
  
**painting roots ..... 2**  
**white savior ..... 3**  
**hall of fame ..... 4**  
**white luxury .....5**  
**the safety code .....6**  
**just like you .....7**  
**safe space .....8**  
**the caged bird that stings .....9**  
**aave .....10**  
**worthy .....11**  
**elephant in the room .....12**  
**to be American .....13**  
**black joy .....14**  
**pwi culture .....15**  
**beauty in differences .....16**  
**black fatigue .....17**  
**black lives matter .....18**  
**abolish 12 .....19**

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**Rest in Peace to all the beautiful Black souls lost to the hands of police brutality.**

### **Artist Statement**

*Ebony Eyes* is a poetry collection that captivates the Black student perspective of navigating through the campus of a predominantly white institution. The purpose of this poetry collection is to creatively discuss how our experiences differ from those of our white peers. It is to provide an understanding of the issues that Black students face in their college experience, ranging from achievement barriers to triggered trauma to dealing with frequent racial stressors. Each piece offers a view on just some of the many thoughts, emotions, experiences that we commonly experience. My hope is for this collection to spark genuine conversations that aren't centered on simply diversity but acknowledging that the outer societal White world has its effects on the campus climate as well. I hope that this will help move towards inclusivity and effective change at PWIs and consider the eyes of Black students.

It is the first poetry collection that I have ever written and comes from a vulnerable place of a range of emotions- anger, grief, confusion, sadness, fatigue, healing, and hope. Writing has always been a form of art I connect to the most as my voice cannot always express as much as I would like to say in words. It allows me to both heal emotionally and express myself in an honest and open way. Racial injustices have always been around but specifically after this year of witnessing the racial war occurring during a global pandemic, my emotions heightened greatly. Each of these pieces are special to me and have brought me a sense of releases.

Some writers who have inspired my work are Billy Chapata, Toni Morrison, Ta-Nehisi Coates, and so many more.

*“If there is a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, you must be the one to write it.”-Toni Morrison*

**painting roots**

on a journey to find my roots.

roots of beautiful hues

of past creations,

darker traumatic shades

of oppression,

valuable colors of history

dropping

the oppressor's veil.

taking my roots

and

painting a new image,

buried stories

will be brought to light.

unique works of art,

distant

from the ones before it.

note: this one's **honest**

**white savior**

uncovering infamous country portraits,

I am peeling off

the cemented illusive paint

that layers ebony colors.

schoolmaster covers the revelation

with its brutal paintbrush

in each lesson,

bringing only ivory colors

removing

all colors of oppression.

comforting art

depicting white men

as saviors,

rather than ones

who caused harm.

darker colors underneath

this fixed painting,

though the artist clings

to the colors

of false perception.

for image is far greater than reality.

***welcome to america.***

**hall of fame**

up goes the painting  
of abe lincoln,  
an honor  
for freeing Black chains.  
confusing portrait to me-  
he did not break the chains,  
simply loosened the shackles.  
variations of this painting  
all around me  
different colors for columbus,  
different strokes for thomas,  
beneath all remains  
the same image  
of white lies.  
tall tales of discovery  
tales of equality for all  
about time  
for the painting to retire-  
I am emancipating myself  
from the museum  
of white perspective.

**white luxury**

a luxury  
to have inherited privilege in  
your place of home.

to travel through life  
with an safety net  
ready to catch  
you at every slip.

to be able  
to make mistakes  
freely  
with little fear  
of repercussions.

to be seen  
blameless  
in any situation  
against  
your black peers.

a luxury  
that does not extend  
to me.  
this safety net  
of white design  
waits for us to fall,  
not to catch,  
but to wish us farewell.

**the safety code**

twice the work,  
half the reward,  
make it half as far.

straighten your curls,  
there is no room  
for blackness  
in professionalism.

remember to code switch,  
slang ain't gonna get you far.

smile through the trauma,  
no room  
for the angry black woman here.  
strong black woman  
easier to control.

conceal your black skin  
in the white mask  
day by day,  
just maybe  
you'll make it **halfway**.

do you recognize the code?  
creating two versions of me  
but can't you see?  
acceptance is the upgrade.

**just like you**

human just like you.

breathe just like you.

bleed just like you.

jog just like you.

sleep in my house just like you.

make mistakes just like you.

innocent just like you.

deserve justice just like you.

deserve to live just like you.

matter

just like you.

**safe space**

*leave your mask at the door.  
we want to see all that you are.*

reclaim a piece of me  
in this safe space of mine.

joining together  
my brothers and sisters,  
I feel safe.

a certain bright aura  
in the room-  
the intellect,  
the beauty,  
the laughter,  
the pain,  
the healing,  
it glows off  
each ebony skin.

sharing our  
encounters with the white world,  
a moment of release,  
to find healing in our emotions,  
proof that we can reclaim our power.  
I feel understood here.

there is space for me here

the caged bird that stings

slight comments in class

it wasn't a big deal

said she was from africa

she didn't look like it

told her about my mission trip

the kids saved me

asked if i could touch her hair

so long, is it real

she was very well-spoken

surely why she was chosen for honors

another day, another microaggression

although not so **micro**

representing the homeland

didn't look **black** enough for her

introducing the white savior complex

did you save them?

i am not a museum display

please do not touch my hair

thought i was smart for a black kid

not for my intelligence

*i don't understand*

why she was so angry

why she was so ignorant

**aave**

please don't touch my hair  
no you cannot say n\*\*\*\*  
not even  
in the freaky friday song  
no language of yours.

it's the constant thievery for me

culture is ours  
not yours to cosign  
take every piece of our design  
to get all the shine

spilling the tea for you  
calling me sis ain't woke  
cornrows not for you  
hella bold to say our words

cute when you use it  
ghetto when I do  
that don't make no sense to me

**worthy**

in our skin.

not the designer

of our value.

see dull

where we see shine,

see criminals all the time

hood up or hood down,

treat us like animals,

seems like you're

the real thug.

beyond worthy

from birth

nothing we can't accomplish

black excellence

can't be defined

**elephant in the room**

student by morning

activist by day

thug by night

criminal all the time

where to find me

in the middle of this fight?

student activists,

writers of the work,

somehow you still earn

when will it be your turn

to actually learn?

don't want to talk about it

what a privilege to choose

400 years & counting

'bout tired of the denial

what's the boundary for you?

**to be american**

all lives matter

any but mine

white lives

blue lives

no black to be found

america backs the blue

white supremacy the glue

don't expect

my pledge to the flag

ain't no liberty calls

no justice for all

very divisible after all

time for the veil

of allegiance to fall

**black joy**

I deserve to smile more  
in this strange world of yours  
shifting the lens  
got to be more  
to my life  
than fighting to be heard  
restful days  
with glimmers of joy  
hope  
for a brighter tomorrow

searching for joy  
in this loving world of mine  
laughter with the homies  
slow whine on the dance floor  
flavorful homecooked meals of spice  
ebony sorrows into beautiful creativity  
happy in this cultural garden of mine.

**pwi culture**

questionable artist

inspired by Black pain.

kkk painting

in the student halls

claimed it as something small.

behind the curtain,

behind the scenes

saw hateful ivory eyes.

pain was not yours to paint

can't help but wonder

what else is hiding behind the curtain?

**beauty in difference**

accept me  
as I come  
no need  
for the divide  
got some differences  
that don't do no harm

kinky curly  
darker shades  
gifted culture  
not a crime  
system designed  
to conquer us all  
can do better at anytime  
got nothing to fear of  
this beautiful ebony skin of mine.

**black fatigue**

screaming in the streets,  
while still trying to submit  
a finals sheet

I  
can't  
breathe.

hashtag yesterday,  
hashtag today,  
could be me tomorrow.  
can't catch a break,  
shed some tears,  
feel like you want me to disappear.  
clean up the fear,  
pray that justice is near,  
remain clear,  
I will persevere

**black lives matter**

do they really to you?

lawn signs

t-shirts

protest photo ops

performative emails

got to give you

a round of applause,

what great marketing you have

use it to hide behind the truth

diversity to you

one token face

in the room

silence all talks

of injustice & change

no inclusion around

what matters more to you:

capitalism or a human life?

**abolish 12**

america's favorite cult  
break the law with  
murder of  
my brothers and sisters,  
following the  
beloved patriotic code,  
too much blood  
on the hands  
can't quite be washed.  
most dangerous gang in america,  
walking replicas on campus grounds.  
lawful system  
when it benefits you,  
I got a few chains  
that belong to you.  
thin blue lines  
everywhere I go,  
a remind of the  
treasured terrorism,  
united states of slavery  
time to abolish it all.