

A human being



June 23, 2020

By Nate Smelle

What can be said about the killing of George Floyd that hasn't already been said about Eric Garner, Breonna Taylor, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Laquan McDonald, Botham John, Jamar Clark, Stephon Clark, Philando Castile, Alton Sterling, Freddie Gray, or Walter Scott?

When I first heard of the video, without seeing it I thought to myself ? not again, how can this keep happening over and over, and nothing ever gets done about it? Without getting into the details of each of the people listed above, the fact is that they were all killed by people who were paid ? with the victims' own tax dollars ? to protect them.

For a moment, thinking of how many videos of Black people being killed by police in the U.S. that I had seen in the past, I questioned whether I should even watch the video. That was until I turned on the news and saw images of the chaos that had erupted throughout the U.S. because of this particular killing.

Turning in to all eight minutes and 46 seconds that officer Derek Chauvin intentionally pressed his knee on the throat of George Floyd, I knew instantly why his death had sparked the revolution being televised.

As horrifying as it is watching Floyd breathe his last breath, what disgusted, enraged and depressed me most about the video was listening to him calling for his ?Mama,? and pleading with Chauvin ?Please, I can't breathe, officer. Don't kill me. They're going to kill me, man. Come on, man, I cannot breathe. I cannot breathe. They're going to kill me. They're going to kill me. I can't breathe. I can't breathe. Please sir, please, please, please, I can't breathe.?

It was the second time I watched Floyd's final breath and listened to his last words that I really picked up on what it was that made this footage so powerful. For me, it is the fact that as Chauvin is kneeling on Floyd's neck as he lay handcuffed on the pavement, calling for help and mercy, someone off-screen witnessing the killing in person shouted ?He's a human, bro!?. It was at this point that I noticed the other three officers: J. Alexander Kueng, Thomas Lane and Tou Thao standing by and doing nothing to stop Chauvin. As the American writer and artist William S. Burroughs once wrote ?There are no innocent bystanders ? what are they doing there in the first place?? Now that millions of people around the world have witnessed the cause of Floyd's death, as bystanders we all have a responsibility to take action against racism.

Racial violence, police brutality, and hate are not just American problems. As Canadians we need to realize this and get to work putting an end to this pathetically dysfunctional and evil way of thinking towards and treating other human beings.

No matter what colour our skin may be, what country we come from, what god or planet we consider sacred, we are all human beings and we are all in this together.