

Document 4C- Titus Kaphar : “[I Cannot Sell You This Painting](#),” June 2020

I
can not
sell
you
this
painting.

In her expression, I see the Black mothers who are unseen, and rendered helpless in this fury against their babies.
As I listlessly wade through another cycle of violence against Black people,
I paint a Black mother...
eyes closed,
furrowed brow,
holding the contour of her loss.

Is this what it means for us?
Are black and loss
analogous colors in America?
If Malcolm could not fix it,
if Martin could not fix it,
if Michael,
Sandra,
Trayvon,
Tamir,
Breonna and
Now George Floyd...
can be murdered
and nothing changes...
wouldn't it be foolish to remain hopeful?
Must I accept that this is what it means to be Black
in America?

Do
not
ask
me
to be
hopeful.

I have given up trying to describe the feeling of knowing that I can not be safe in the country of my birth...
How do I explain to my children that the very system set up to protect others could be a threat to our existence?
How do I shield them from the psychological impact of knowing that for the rest of our lives we will likely be seen as a threat,
and for that
We may die?
A MacArthur won't protect you .
A Yale degree won't protect you .
Your well-spoken plea will not change hundreds of years of institutionalized hate.
You will never be as eloquent as Baldwin,
you will never be as kind as King...
So,
isn't it only reasonable to believe that there will be no
change
soon?

And so those without hope...
Burn.

This Black mother understands the fire.
Black mothers
understand despair.
I can change NOTHING in this world,
but in paint,
I can realize her....
This brings me solace...
not hope,
but solace.
She walks me through the flames of rage.
My Black mother rescues me yet again.
I want to be sure that she is seen.
I want to be certain that her story is told.
And so,
this time
America must hear her voice.
This time
America must believe her.