

Time  
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GAGOSIAN  
TIME

“I Cannot Sell You This Painting.” Artist Titus Kaphar on his George Floyd  
TIME Cover

Titus Kaphar



*Painting by Titus Kaphar for TIME*

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.

One

Black

mother's

loss

WILL

be

memorialized.

This time

I will not let her go.

I

can not

sell

you

this

painting.