



# Call

new protest songs

a project of

COSACOSA art at large, Inc.

# Call – new protest songs

**Call, an album of 14 new protest songs**, combines the narrative power of 8 Philadelphia songwriters of color with the artistry of over 30 area singers and musicians. Funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, the album is a project of COSACOSA art at large, Inc.

**Call originated as a "call to action"** highlighting issues from police brutality to mental health, from bodily autonomy to housing insecurity, from the school-to-prison pipeline to the power of Black culture. Individual tracks are written from varied perspectives and in diverse musical genres, including neo soul, jazz, R&B, folk, and gospel.

COSACOSA convened **the artistic team** in early 2021. Participating songwriters include Jay Fluellen, Keisha Hutchins, Homer Jackson, Namarah, Victor Rodriguez, Jr., Venissa Santi, James Solomon, and Cassendre Xavier.

The album was recorded and produced by Anthony Tidd of TidbiT Sonos, Homer Jackson of Philadelphia Jazz Project, and Chris Ploss of Sunwood Recording. Album cover art is by Shae Payne.

**Call is available for download and streaming** on all major digital platforms and at [cosacosa.org/Call.html](https://cosacosa.org/Call.html)

Many thanks to the National Endowment for the Arts for supporting the creation of *Call*. Many thanks, as well, to those COSACOSA funders providing support for project administration and outreach: Independence Foundation; Jadestone, Inc.; the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts; Philadelphia Arts in Education Partnership; and the Philadelphia Cultural Fund.



## TRACKS

- 1: **Who Does The World Stop For?** Namarah
- 2: **Captivity** James Solomon & Homer Jackson
- 3: **Fighting for Room** Victor Rodriguez, Jr.
- 4: **Everybody** Keisha Hutchins
- 5: **I Am Here** Cassendre Xavier
- 6: **There is No You Without Us** Jay Fluellen
- 7: **Nuff Said** Venissa Santi
- 8: **The Deferred** Namarah
- 9: **STPP (School-to-Prison Pipeline)** James Solomon & Homer Jackson
- 10: **Let's Be Authentic** Cassendre Xavier
- 11: **To the Highest Power** Victor Rodriguez, Jr.
- 12: **Omigoodness** Venissa Santi
- 13: **Stand in Your Power** Keisha Hutchins
- 14: **Strength in Our Unity** Jay Fluellen

Please note some *Call* songs contain lyrics referring to racism, mental health, police brutality, incarceration, displacement, sexual assault, and death.

# WHO DOES THE WORLD STOP FOR?

music & lyrics by **Namarah Anjel McCall**

Hands up for the ghetto girls,  
the chocolate swirl, the black pearl.  
Everybody wanna white it out.  
Everybody wanna white us out.  
You can't write us out.  
Can't write off a face,  
and can't stop a bullet.  
And when the hero's a villain,  
who gets protected?  
Who gets protected?

Who does the world stop for?  
Not for me, my brother, not you.  
Who does the world stop for?  
Not for me, my brother, not you.  
Who does the world stop for?  
Not for me, my brother, not you.  
Who does the world stop for?  
Not for me, my brother, not you.

Hands hold a burning candle,  
burning in yesterday's news.  
You feel good for feeling bad,  
and you throw away the tissues.  
You had no excuse.  
You can't write off a face,  
and you can't stop a bullet.  
And when the hero's a villain,  
who gets protected?  
Who gets protected?

Who does the world stop for?  
Not for me, my brother, not you.  
Who does the world stop for?  
Not for me, my brother, not you.  
Who does the world stop for?  
Not for me, my brother, not you.  
Who does the world stop for?  
Not for me, my brother, not you.

Nobody wants to be real.  
Nobody wants to be real.  
Nobody wants to be real  
when it gets real, when it gets real.  
Nobody wants to be real.  
Nobody wants to be real.  
Nobody wants to be real  
when it gets real, when it gets real.  
Nobody wants to be real.  
Nobody wants to be real.  
Nobody wants to be real  
when it gets real, when it gets real.

Who does the world stop for?  
Not for me, my brother, not you.  
Who does the world stop for?  
Not for me, my brother, not you.  
Who does the world stop for?  
Not for me, my brother, not you.  
Who does the world stop for?  
Not for me, my brother, not you.

*Credits:*

vocals - **Namarah**

instrumentation - **Joshua Rollin**

produced by **Namarah & Joshua Rollin**

post-production/mastered by **Anthony Tidd** at **TidbiT SonoS**

*From the songwriter:*

"Who Does the World Stop For?" was written after a conversation I had with a peer. We were frustrated by the cyclical routine our country displays when it comes to social injustice. How the fires get hot and then, like trends and fads, the unrest simmers to a whisper until it finally disappears – only to be stirred back up again after another life is taken and only after enough noise is made to bring attention to the loss. Our world keeps turning, and it should, but my frustration lies with the choice and commitment to hold on to what is comfortable. It's easy to feel the tragedies of Black men and women; it's easy because it's like putting on a coat when it's cold, but when summer comes and the coat is too hot for the season, our coats are put away. Such is America – when we must face change, the country chooses to return to the old and easy ways – which begs the question, when will this world stop?

# CAPTIVITY

music & lyrics by **James Solomon & Homer Jackson**

This is not the number of my phone,  
and it's certainly not my home.  
This cell is the place  
that locks me away from all the places I belong.

Wish I knew, cause it's never been clear,  
how did we wind up here?  
I can see me just crossing the sea  
free from captivity,  
free from captivity.

It's been that way since we were first kidnapped  
and brought across the sea.  
We never know who gets picked up next  
for captivity.

Don't try to reach me at this number  
'cause it's not the number of my phone.  
This cell is on a block  
that keeps us all locked down and so alone.

If we were all free to sail 'cross the sea,  
who would welcome us with open arms?  
Where is our story, and where's family?  
Tell me, where to we find home?  
Tell me, where to we find home?

*Credits:*

vocals - **V. Shayne Frederick**

violin - **Veronica Jurkiewicz**

piano - **Adam Faulk**

bass - **Matt Engle**

drums - **Malik Henry**

produced by **Homer Jackson** at **Philadelphia Jazz Project**

mastered by **Anthony Tidd** at **Tidbit SonoS**

published by **Tafodoli Enterprises**

*From the songwriters:*

"Captivity" speaks to the "super predator" image that is the most recent iteration of a long line of "official" distortions attached to Black males. The song takes apart the hidden messages that shape how Americans connect Black men to crime and presents the main character as part of a larger historical pool of potential captives.

# FIGHTING FOR ROOM

music & lyrics by **Victor Rodriguez, Jr.**

Where will we live when it's all over?  
Who will come in to raze it down?  
When will they say, "It's time to go"?  
Why do they always push us out?  
What is this thing they built beside us?  
How will they understand what it's like?

Just living from day to day,  
just trying to somehow find our way,  
just singing the same old tune,  
we keep on fighting for room.

Devour and rape the neighborhood;  
wipe out the history and the soul –  
"The powers that be" have been paid.  
Too late to hold on to our dreams,  
too late for pride and dignity,  
we now go back to what we know.

Just living from day to day,  
just trying to somehow find our way,  
just singing the same old tune,  
we keep on fighting for room.

Just living from day to day,  
just trying to somehow find our way,  
just singing the same old tune,  
we keep on fighting for room.  
We keep on fighting for room.  
We keep on fighting for room.

*Credits:*

lead vocals - **Victor Rodriguez, Jr.**

backup vocals - **Demetria Joyce Bailey, Joanne Joella & Moriah Middlebrook**

piano & bass - **Anthony Tidd**

guitar - **Jack Faracchio**

drums - **Ricardo Martínó**

produced & mastered by **Anthony Tidd** at **Tidbit SonoS**

*From the songwriter:*

"Fighting For Room" is a commentary on the current gentrification affecting my immediate neighborhood and the city of Philadelphia as a whole. The song asks questions to which there may never be clear answers, as more and more over-priced and aesthetically-stoic new construction pops up everywhere at lightning speed. Developers disregard long-time residents of lower-income neighborhoods, and some local politicians are complicit in their suspicious silence. As rents creep skyward (while wages remain the same), the sense of fear and helplessness in our city becomes more and more palpable.

# EVERYBODY

music & lyrics by **Keisha Hutchins**

This is my body.  
These are their bodies.  
Everybody  
alone.  
So leave this body,  
leave their bodies.  
Everybody  
alone.

Lines, so many lines  
of words to tell us how to live.  
Lines, lines such perfect straight lines,  
and, if crossed, what must we give?  
Lines to make boxes,  
lines to prisons and cages.  
Lines to make boxes,  
lines to prisons and cages.

How, how many times  
must we tell you how we want to be free?  
All your controlling  
from a false sense of morality:  
rules to conform,  
to control,  
to straighten what you see as bent.  
And it's funny 'cause you can't even see  
the crookedness of your grin.

This is my body.  
These are their bodies.  
Everybody  
alone.

So leave this body,  
leave their bodies.  
Everybody  
alone.

Doors, so many doors,  
will this one be for me?  
Why, why, why can't I choose  
the door that's right for me?  
Doors, to what ending?  
Or doors closing,  
depending on who I am.  
Doors of your fancy, but not my legacy,  
but to please your judge within.

And who do you think you are?  
That you know everything and everyone?  
And what gives you the right to define us?  
Our destiny?  
What's best for me?  
Cause it's not you.  
It's certainly not you.  
No, it ain't you.

This is my body.  
These are their bodies.  
Everybody  
alone.  
So leave this body,  
leave their bodies.  
Everybody  
alone.

*Credits:*

vocals - **Keisha Hutchins**

piano - **Micah Graves**

bass - **Anthony Tidd**

drums - **Doug Hirlinger**

produced & mastered by **Anthony Tidd** at **Tidbit SonoS**

*From the songwriter:*

"Everybody" was inspired by an Instagram thread where people were talking about the many ways in which our government, our laws, and various institutions try to lay claim and control over our bodies. While the conversation started with talking about the rights of trans individuals, it expanded to include ways in which those who have uteruses feel controlled in terms of abortion rights. As I thought about this idea of systems and institutional control over one's body it reminded me of how Black and Brown bodies are policed and controlled through violence and incarceration, and how this begins at such a young age within our school systems. I thought about the children who are still being caged and detained around the country, separated from their families, also because they are brown and immigrants – yet another way of othering, controlling, and dehumanizing. This song is about empowering us to reclaim our bodies as our own and to resist these systems that continue to try to control us and disempower us because of who are or are not.

# I AM HERE

music & lyrics by **Cassendre Xavier**

I don't mind if you say to me you are too tense to smile.  
Come and pull up a chair, my dear; talk to me for a while.  
I am willing to listen, to explore, and to share.  
We can start to erase these fixed, practiced smiles that we wear.  
I am here.

Grab up all of your worries and hide them in my garage  
next to my jar of pennies. Do not hide your old scars.  
We are healing together, though we are sometimes alone.  
Holding hands can be frightening when we're so far from home.  
I am here.  
I am here.

Pain is time, and time is passing.  
See your future.  
Leave your past behind.

You're more precious than you realize.  
You can tell me your hopes and fears.  
You know where I am.  
I am here.  
I am here.  
I am here.  
I am here.

(I'm here; I'm here; I'm here; I'm here.)

*Credits:*

vocals & guitar - **Cassandre Xavier**

bass & percussion - **Anthony Tidd**

produced & mastered by **Anthony Tidd** at **Tidbit SonoS**

*From the songwriter:*

"I Am Here" talks about having someone in your corner, with whom you can share those dark thoughts – someone to help strengthen you for another day. Having lifelong depression (bipolar) and regular suicidal ideation, I need lots of support. Many like me have a support team of counselors, coaches, medications, and also friends to help keep us going. Many aren't aware that they need a lot more support. That's part of why when someone slips away, we're surprised – because they suffered in secret. Life for people with suicidal ideation isn't lived by the week or even by the day. Often it's by the moment, sometimes by the minute, breath by breath. This song is a reminder that it is okay to ask for and receive professional help. Among men and communities of color, it has not been easy to do this. Fortunately, the stigma and macho ideas about mental illness have improved with the times. Let's reassure the people in our lives and in our communities that we are "here" for them. And let's be "here" for ourselves, because all care begins with self-care.

# THERE IS NO YOU WITHOUT US

music & lyrics by **Jay Fluellen**

Where would the landowner be without those who work the land?  
Where would your house be without those who built it up?  
Foundations may not be seen, but foundations are surely felt.  
There is no you without us.  
Without us there is no you.

Where would the highway be without those who paved the way?  
Where would justice be without those who raised their voice?  
Foundations may not be seen, but foundations are surely felt.  
There is no you without us.  
Without us there is no you.

Where would the restaurant be without those who cooked the food?  
Where would freedom be without those who fought for their rights?  
Foundations may not be seen, but foundations are surely felt.  
There is no you without us.  
Without us there is no you.

You cannot dismiss us without causing harm to yourself.  
You cannot ignore us without denying that which is true.  
There is no you without us.  
Without us there is no you.

There is no you without us.  
Without us there is no you.

There is no you without us.  
Without us there is no you.

There is no you without us.  
Without us there is no you.

*Credits:*

vocals, piano & organ - **Jay Fluellen**

guitar, bass & percussion - **Anthony Tidd**

produced & mastered by **Anthony Tidd** at **Tidbit SonoS**

*From the songwriter:*

"There is No You Without Us" highlights and honors the symbiotic relationship between those "in charge" and those who work for them. The restaurant owner is nowhere without the people who cook the food. For me, this is analogous to many facets of life in the United States. The one thing that some institutional forces try to whitewash, is the one thing central to our country's culture: the rich, diverse, complex, and often painful histories of many cultures having woven the tapestry that defines our lives here. Let us learn to acknowledge, honor and respect each other, understanding that lifting up one heritage does not diminish another. There is no United States without the people who built it up.

# NUFF SAID

music & lyrics by **Venissa Santi**

Dear God,  
If I could write you a letter,  
I'd tell you what I think about this world.

Dear God,  
I just want to know you better,  
want this fellow man of mine to stop his chatter  
and think about what matters more  
than all the prizes he could win  
and all the race and competition.  
What's in store? So much more.  
What's in store? So much more.

If we're abiding by all the rules of brotherhood  
then we'd treasure our neighborhood  
and love where we're living  
and ride the L-O-V-E train to forgiving.

If we're avoiding the true conversation,  
how can we broach the situation  
and make a difference on this planet?  
I know it's like swallowing the gambit  
(that means too many things to conceive, child),  
but you got to, dammit!  
You got to...you got to...  
save the world somehow  
and if you don't think it's your job  
then we'll see what is in store...  
see if you can explain to me  
why you choose to opt out of your chance  
to really live,  
to really feel,  
to really heal...  
nuff said.

If we're abiding by all the rules of brotherhood  
then we'd treasure our neighborhood  
and love where we're living  
and ride the L-O-V-E train to forgiving.

If we're avoiding the true conversation,  
how can we broach the situation  
and make a difference on this planet?  
I know it's like swallowing the gambit  
(that means too many things to conceive, child),  
but you got to, dammit!  
You got to...you got to...  
save the world somehow  
and if you don't think it's your job  
then we'll see what is in store...  
see if you can explain to me  
why you choose to opt out of your chance  
to really live,  
to really feel,  
to really heal...  
nuff said.

*Credits:*

vocals - **Venissa Santi**

keyboards - **Michael Stark**

banjo - **Joe Hayward**

bass - **Walter Lorenzut**

drums - **Zaun Marshburn**

produced by **Chris Ploss** at **Sunwood Recording**

mastered by **Anthony Tidd** at **Tidbit SonoS**

*From the songwriter:*

The melody and lyrics of "Nuff Said" came to me in a stream of consciousness that I, fortunately, was quick enough to record. Through its linear structure, I played with creating vocalese-style melodies that happened to be wordy, complex, and catchy. The original idea came at a time when I was writing a lot of compositions for musicals in collaboration with other artists and playwrights. The concept is that of a soliloquy: initially, a person who feels deeply is asking God to listen and give them the strength to tell their fellow man to stop all the chatter and "think about what matters more than all the race and competition." The song ends as a call to youth: that it is up to all of us to do our part, to do whatever we can in our own way "to save the world somehow." Although the thought is daunting, if we don't do anything, if we give up on our chance to create change, then we will just be standing on the sidelines, watching what happens by default. We won't have the words to explain why we missed our opportunity to do something for humanity and for the planet.

# THE DEFERRED

music & lyrics by **Namarah Anjel McCall**

Live,  
it seemed so easy to do, so easy to give;  
learn to swallow the pill and take the hit.  
It's a devastating game.  
Dream,  
it was so easy to say it would be okay.  
Time turned hope into cries;  
now my tears are dry  
like a raisin in the sun.

I can't breathe.  
I can't breathe.  
I can't, I can't be.  
I can't breathe.  
I can't breathe.  
I can't, I can't be.

So, do we explode?  
Fry behind the glass, and let them go,  
fade away into the dark never exposed –  
no, no, no.  
Make the heavy load lighten,  
with the hands against our foes.  
Strike a match and set fire to it all.  
Oh, the oxygen will fuel the tired, screaming

I can't breathe.  
I can't breathe.  
I can't, I can't be.  
I can't breathe.  
I can't breathe.  
I can't, I can't be.

Oh, fester like a sore,  
imploring for the better hand to be served.  
Oh, syrupy sweet,  
the blood dripping there at our feet,  
suffocating me.  
Voices, voices, voices whispering,  
whispering to me, to me, hmm

I can't breathe.  
I can't breathe.  
I can't, I can't be.  
I can't breathe.  
I can't breathe.  
I can't, I can't be.  
Oh, I can't be.

*Credits:*

vocals - **Namarah**

cello - **Zachary Brown**

keyboards - **Jeff Smith**

drums - **Malik Chandler**

recorded by **Tito Orjih** at **Rec Philly**

produced & mastered by **Anthony Tidd** at **TidbiT SonoS**

*From the songwriter:*

Inspired by Langston Hughes' "A Dream Deferred," this song narrates or tries to capture the pain of loss, death, and the dreams of Black and marginalized bodies. I wrote this song years ago, in 2014, while I was a student in college, and it continues to reverberate into the present time. How many more lives must scream before a new dream can bloom?

# STPP (SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE)

music & lyrics by **James Solomon & Homer Jackson**

They done built these pipelines.  
School's got these pipelines.  
Jail's got these same lines: STPP

You're a poor boy, you should know this:  
everybody's taking notice.  
Yes, they're looking at everything you do.

School is more than where they send you  
when they try to dead end you.  
You've got to find the school in you.

They talk about a school-to-prison pipeline.  
You can escape it if you use your mind.  
There are many who escaped before you.  
Use your mind, and you'll know what to do.  
Just RIDE your imagination.

In life there are so many lessons.  
You can hang with the crooks or get hooked by the books –  
it's on you.  
If they call you a nerd, it's only a word  
and it won't hurt you.  
When you learn to be free, you'll know slavery  
is not for you.  
And neither are these streets.

School-to-prison pipeline designed to neglect the mind.  
Makes it hard to find a way to be free.  
School-to-prison pipeline designed to neglect the mind.  
Check out all the poor zip codes; you know that's where they'll be.  
That's how small town neighbors get free labor from the big city.  
STTP, STTP: School-to-prison pipeline.

*Credits:*

vocals - **Waverly Alston & Bethlehem Roberson**

piano & organ - **Adam Faulk**

bass - **Jocko MacNelly**

drums - **Malik Henry**

produced by **Homer Jackson** at **Philadelphia Jazz Project**

mastered by **Anthony Tidd** at **Tidbit SonoS**

published by **Tafodoli Enterprises**

*From the songwriters:*

“STPP (School-to-Prison-Pipeline)” highlights the vulnerability of people whose educational experience is defined by their zip codes. In these exposed communities, avoiding the lure of criminal activity is an essential tool for growing up. Although dedicated teachers may work against the tide of under-resourced schools, young people in these communities must take charge of their own learning. The economics of prisons is big business for some small towns, and young people must avoid becoming products of this system at all costs.

# LET'S BE AUTHENTIC

music & lyrics by **Cassandre Xavier**

What's real is true. What's true is love.  
And why, why wouldn't we choose love?  
We have a voice, and we have a choice  
to let the power of love chase the fear away  
from the authentic.  
Let's be authentic.

You're who you are, and who you are is good enough.  
Why would you want to change?  
Since who you are is love,  
if you change the way you are,  
you take more love away. And we need more love.  
Please be authentic.  
Let's be authentic.

You're fine the way you are.  
You're the way nature made you.  
You're fine the way you are.  
Bring your light out to the world.  
You're fine the way you are.  
You're the way nature made you.  
You're fine the way you are.  
Bring your love out to the world.  
Please be authentic.  
Let's be authentic.

What's real is true. What's true is love.  
And why would we all be the same?  
We have a voice, and we have a choice  
to let the power of love chase our fears away  
and be authentic  
Let's be authentic.

You're fine the way you are.  
There are other people like you.  
You're fine the way you are.  
It is safe to be yourself.  
And be authentic.  
Let's be authentic.

I'm fine the way I am.  
I'm finding others like me.  
I'm fine the way I am.  
And I love and like myself.

We're fine the way we are.  
We embrace those who are different.  
They're fine the way they are.  
We don't have to be the same  
when we're authentic.  
Let's be authentic.

I am authentic.  
You are authentic.  
They are authentic.  
We are authentic.  
Let's be authentic.

*Credits:*

vocals & guitar - **Cassandre Xavier**

violin - **Dorothea DiGiovanni**

produced & mastered by **Anthony Tidd** at **Tidbit SonoS**

*From the songwriter:*

"Let's Be Authentic" is an anthem to self-love and truthful self-expression. When we speak and live our truths, we are healthier, and we demonstrate healthy self-esteem. Being authentic makes the world safer for everyone and helps to foster respect for others. "It is safe to be myself" and "I embrace those who are different" are among the lessons of the song. Being authentic won't completely eradicate bullying, for example, but it decreases the likelihood that it will happen, and a victim of bullying who values their authenticity may be stronger and more likely survive to live and talk about it later in life. There are many ways one can live truthfully and authentically. It is up to each of us to discover what our truth is, and to then live it – and to support others in living theirs.

# TO THE HIGHEST POWER

music & lyrics by **Victor Rodriguez, Jr.**

Lift me...lift me and carry me to higher ground.  
Tell me that I must break free before the raging waters gather 'round.  
Help me...help me to find a way to peace of mind.  
Show me how to find the strength to leave the useless fighting all behind.

Don't let me fall into another trap;  
I don't want to live that way.  
Don't let me sit upon another stone,  
hoping for a better day.  
I need you to open up my eyes.

They yell at me...they yell at push me to the corner.  
Do they know I'm not the one that started all the madness at the border?  
They step on me, don't even offer an apology.  
How can I diffuse the pain, the anger that is holding on to me?

Don't let me fall into another trap;  
I don't want to live that way.  
Don't let me sit upon another stone,  
hoping for a better day.  
I need you to open up my eyes.

Don't let me fall into another trap;  
I don't want to live that way.  
Don't let me sit upon another stone,  
hoping for a better day.  
I need you to open up my eyes.

Hold my hand; take me where the peaceful gardens grow.  
Hold my hand; teach me all the lessons I should know.  
Hold my hand; lead me to a better place.  
We have no more time to waste.  
Got to save our human race.  
Hold my hand!

*Credits:*

lead vocals - **Victor Rodriguez, Jr.**

backup vocals - **Demetria Joyce Bailey, Joanne Joella & Moriah Middlebrook**

piano & bass - **Anthony Tidd**

guitar - **Jack Faracchio**

drums - **Ricardo Martínó**

produced & mastered by **Anthony Tidd** at **Tidbit SonoS**

*From the songwriter:*

"To the Highest Power" was created as a response to personally witnessing and experiencing the extreme violence and anger in our society, as well as to constantly viewing it on social media. The song simultaneously comments on not letting one's outrage become part of perpetuating the violence, and also on our perceived apathy to it in so many circumstances. The song is pleading to one's "Highest Power" (however one may label that entity) to please help in achieving a more enlightened and harmonious state of mind. Coincidentally, I've always struggled with advanced mathematics and vaguely understand the concept that numbers can be calculated "to the highest power." The irony and play on words were not lost on me in realizing that my personal, spiritual "Highest Power" wanted to keep me humble in recognizing certain concepts are well above my head.

# OMIGOODNESS

music & lyrics by **Venissa Santi**

Oh my goodness, we want peace.  
We want justice 'n liberty.  
Rise up, fellow man -  
we stand hand-in-hand.  
Did you ever hear anything better than that that-that-that-that?

In the morning when I rise, I've a whole new lot in life.  
In the nighttime when I rest, I know I did my best.

Oh my goodness, we want peace.  
Sing my song, and we'll be strong.  
Rise up, fellow man -  
we'll stand hand-in-hand.  
Did you ever hear anything better than that?

No oppression and no greed,  
happy children; no suffering  
We're done with your lies;  
we won't compromise.  
Did you ever hear anything better than that?

In the morning when I rise, I have a whole new lot in life.  
In the nighttime when I rest, I know I did my best.

Oh my goodness, we want peace.  
happy children; no suffering  
We're done with your lies;  
ain't no surprise.  
Did you ever hear anything better than that?

*Credits:*

vocals - **Venissa Santi**

keyboards - **Michael Stark**

banjo - **Joe Hayward**

bass - **Walter Lorenzut**

drums - **Zaun Marshburn**

produced by **Chris Ploss** at **Sunwood Recording**

mastered by **Anthony Tidd** at **Tidbit SonoS**

*From the songwriter:*

"Omigoodness" started as a peace anthem written for a children's theatre group in 2014. I was interested in making the song into a protest-type style – keeping the original chorus, but expanding the verses, creating the intro, and adding tempo shifts. I wanted the Dixieland/Gospel Swing feel to represent the uplifting joy and excitement of hope and the thrill of declaring exactly what you want – in this case, peace, justice, and liberty. The tempo shifts to half-time blues solos, representing the soulful lull of the struggle, and how long it seems to accomplish any kind of consistent change. But we muster the strength to pick up the pace and demand "no oppression and no greed" again – to empower voices to declare that we won't accept lies and how we won't compromise. A special aspect on the recording is the voice saying "children" on the 2nd verse. The speaker is 16-month-old Montessori student with whom I've worked since she was 6 months old. I have had the honor to watch her develop words to advocate for herself. This was her first studio recording (obviously). And I pray for a better world for her and all our children. Lastly, I find that these words may be applied to many cultures and countries whose people are struggling right now, and who have struggled for decades. The song gives voice to the voiceless. I hope that we who live here in the United States can see how valuable our right of freedom of speech is. We are privileged to be able to create and express our thoughts and feelings of protest and not be persecuted.

# STAND IN YOUR POWER

music & lyrics by **Keisha Hutchins**

Standing here between  
my own despair and hallelujah,  
I try to reach for hope amidst  
the anger and the hate,  
searching all around me for  
new reservoirs of strength  
when everything around me  
makes it hard to keep the faith.

But I hear the call that's ringing.  
In my heart it's unrelenting.  
And it says it must be you.  
Be relentless, too; it must be you.  
Well, you must

Stand in your power.  
Raise your fists and say their names.  
Take a knee until things change.  
Stand in your power,  
breathing courage into strength  
with resistance's strong embrace.  
And we will stand free,  
someday, you and me.

Keep waiting to exhale cause  
everyday someone can't breathe.  
How can we celebrate when  
we're still crying by their graves?  
What's a victory when only  
moments of reprieve?  
And things just stay the same,  
and so it's hard to just believe.

Well, they said it won't be easy,  
but the path for change keeps calling.  
And they stood for me and you,  
and so we must, too; we must, too.  
And we must

Stand in your power.  
Raise your fists and say their names.  
Take a knee until things change.  
Stand in your power,  
head held high & standing strong  
with a call that binds us all.  
And we will stand free,  
someday, you and me.

What is it that we're searching for  
that keeps us up at night?  
There's a voice inside that tells  
that we can't give up on this fight.  
If we're the ones we're waiting for,  
we know what we must do.  
It's up to me; it's up to you.

Stand in your power.  
Raise your fists and say their names.  
Take a knee until things change.  
Stand in your power,  
breathing courage into strength  
with resistance's strong embrace.  
And we will stand free,  
someday, you and me.

Stand in your power.  
Raise your fists and say their names.  
Take a knee until things change.  
Stand in your power,  
head held high & standing strong  
with a call that binds us all.  
And we will stand free,  
someday, you and me.  
Stand!  
Stand!

*Credits:*

vocals - **Keisha Hutchins**

piano - **Micah Graves**

bass - **Anthony Tidd**

drums - **Doug Hirlinger**

produced & mastered by **Anthony Tidd** at **Tidbit SonoS**

*From the songwriter:*

"Stand in Your Power" is a call to action. We are at a crossroads where we can either be swallowed up by our fear and despair over what we see and experience or stand in our power to dismantle the different forms of oppression and hate to which we are bearing witness. We are being called to have courage. To dig deep within ourselves and commit to the long-haul that is social justice. We cannot let our fear of "getting it wrong" stand in the way of us trying at all. This work needs to feel like the responsibility of the masses, not the same select few. We know the road to justice is long, messy, and circuitous. We also know that we owe it to those that came before us, on whose shoulders we stand, to persevere and to continue on the path towards justice for all.

# STRENGTH IN OUR UNITY

music & lyrics by **Jay Fluellen**

You won't ignore my truth.  
You won't ignore this fight.  
You won't ignore this problem.  
We will stand for what is right.

We're weak when we're divided.  
We're strong when we're united.  
You can try to tear us down,  
but we'll lift ourselves up.  
There's strength in our unity.

You won't rewrite my history.  
You won't rewrite what is mine.  
You can't take what is not given to you.  
You can't erase what I define.

We're weak when we're divided.  
We're strong when we're united.  
You can try to tear us down,  
but we'll lift ourselves up.  
There's strength in our unity.

You can't take away my freedom.  
You can't imprison my soul.  
You will never silence my voice;  
it will speak loud until our story is told.

We're weak when we're divided.  
We're strong when we're united.  
You can try to tear us down,  
but we'll lift ourselves up.  
There's strength in our unity.

We will stand for what is right.  
We'll raise our voice for what we believe.  
You can try to tear us down,  
but we'll lift ourselves up.  
There's strength in our unity.

We will stand for what is right.  
We'll raise our voice for what we believe.  
You can try to tear us down,  
but we'll lift ourselves up.  
There's strength in our unity.

*Credits:*

lead vocals - **Jay Fluellen**

backup vocals & percussion - **Valerie Gay, Carrie Lessene & Shafiq Hicks**

produced & mastered by **Anthony Tidd** at **Tidbit SonoS**

*From the songwriter:*

"Strength in Our Unity" was written in response to constant insistence in the United States that we divide ourselves into smaller and smaller parts. The boxes on the forms increase at the same rate as marginalized voices in our country. These voices divided cannot match the din of the machine that is the capitalistic, commercialized mainstream. Yet, when the voices find ways to ally and join forces through common goals, there is strength enough for the song to be heard by our children's children.

## About the Songwriters

**Jay Fluellen** is a Philadelphia-born composer, academic, educator, accompanist, pianist, singer, and organist/choir director. His works have been commissioned by numerous performers and institutions, including the Chamber Orchestra First Editions, the Mann Center for the Performing Arts, the Philadelphia Jazz Project, Philadelphia's LiveConnections, Network for New Music, Orchestra 2001, the Relâche New Music Ensemble, Teya Sepinuck and Theater of Witness, and the Bucks County Choral Society. Most recently, Fluellen's *Symphony for McCoy Tyner* was premiered by Musicopia String Orchestra through special commission from Black Music City. Fluellen has a DMA from Temple University in Music Composition, along with certification in K-12 Music Education from Eastern University. Fluellen teaches music at Northeast High School, part of the Philadelphia School District. Since 1997, he has been co-minister of music, with Walt Blocker, at the historic African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas. He is also an adjunct professor at Montgomery County Community College, where he teaches piano, and a member of the Philadelphia Public Orchestra.

**Keisha Hutchins** is a classically trained musician from Oberlin Conservatory as well as a singer-songwriter and educator. Hutchins is passionate about music education and creating access to musical experiences for all children. In addition to teaching music at Abington Friends School, she uses her platform as both a performer and educator to bring attention to social justice issues through both her own performances and educational concerts collaborating with artist-activists from Philadelphia and surrounding areas. She is recipient of the Leeway Foundation's Art and Change award for women who use their art to create social change. Her 90-minute original performance, *Going Home*, debuted as a part of Intercultural Journey's Cultural Migrations through Artistry initiative. The project is an artistic exploration of being a Black, female artist in America, incorporating music from a variety of genres and traditions, from arias to jazz to spirituals.

**Homer Jackson** is an interdisciplinary artist whose work is presented as installation, performance art and media. He uses images, sounds, text, live performance, video, audience participation and found objects to tell stories. Jackson has created performances in collaboration with artists such as the late AACM violinist Leroy Jenkins; Twin Cities-based instrument maker and former AACM president Douglas Ewart; the late Washington DC/Philadelphia poet Essex Hemphill; Baltimore-based multi-media artist, performer, and MacArthur Foundation, "Genius" Award recipient Joyce J. Scott; as well as the award winning, Philadelphia-bred hip-hop ensemble The Roots. Homer Jackson has a BFA from the Philadelphia College of Art and holds a MFA from Temple University's Tyler School of Art. He lives and works in Philadelphia and currently serves as the director of the Philadelphia Jazz Project.

**Namarah Anjel McCall** is a recording artist with a heart for the community and creatives-at-large. She believes in the power of the arts to create transformation in the individual along the continuum of their life. She has worked as not only a performer, but also as an educator, creative coach, and public speaker on the importance of artists and of authenticity in the industry. Namarah has lectured at Temple University on issues of the artists' responsibility and has served in a variety of leadership spaces where she has promoted creativity to be the sole motivation for collaborating and team-building. WXPB called her music "daring," referring to her 2018 release of *Braids*, a three song EP that tells a story of how to heal. Other works, like 2016's "IDC," showcase her edgy bend. Calling her visuals "electrifying," WXPB also noted her performance "works as a dance-floor banger as much as a stripped-down acoustic ballad!" Namarah is honored to be included amongst the multi-talented artists on this collaborative COSACOSA project. Hear more at [iamnamarah.com](http://iamnamarah.com)

**Victor Rodriguez, Jr.** is a singer, songwriter, actor, composer, and vocal director. He has appeared in a multitude of theater and musical theater productions with companies that include the Arden Theater, People's Light, Bristol Riverside Theater, Teatro del Sol, and more. Rodriguez has for many years worked as a voice-over actor in both English and Spanish, and also has appeared in numerous television commercials, industrial videos, and independent films. He is represented by AMA Talent Agency. Founder of Diminuto Music Studio, Rodriguez is also a skilled vocal coach for both adults and children, with extensive experience working in school and community settings. Hear more @SuperMusicvictor on YouTube and at [www.diminutomusicstudio.weebly.com](http://www.diminutomusicstudio.weebly.com)

**Venissa Santi** is a singer, songwriter, arranger, and teaching artist trained in jazz and Afro-Cuban styles. She was born to Cuban parents and raised in Ithaca, NY. She relocated to Philadelphia to study jazz at the University of the Arts, where she fell in love with the American songbook. A skilled composer and arranger, Santi began teaching in the barrio of North Philadelphia with AMLA (Asociación de Músicos Latino Americanos). Santi has traveled extensively in Cuba to research and develop the Afro-Cuban musical repertoire in her own signature jazz style. She has released multiple albums of original and reinterpreted works. Recipient of the prestigious Pew Fellowship for Folk and Traditional Arts, she teaches and tours throughout the United States and the Caribbean. Santi is thankful to the COSACOSA *Call* project for reimagining and preserving "Nuff Said" and "Omigoodness."

**James Solomon** began writing songs with singer-songwriter Eddie Holman as a teenager in the early 1960s in Philadelphia. With Holman, he co-wrote the top hundred songs "This Can't Be True" and "Don't Stop Now," and many other Harthon productions. In 1983 Solomon and his wife, Rochelle Nichols Solomon compiled six children's songs that serve as an instructional tool for the African American Holiday Kwanzaa for Ujima Records. In 1987 James Solomon and Quincy Jacobs established Tafodoli Enterprises, a preproduction studio and publishing company. In the 1990s, he contributed music to "Hair Stories," a film by Master Braider Yvette Smalls and Miyoshi Smith. In 2010 James and Alfred Pollitt co-authored the music for "3 Divas 3" with the play's author Karen Smith. In 2016 Solomon storyboarded the Scribe Video Center Precious Places Documentary short "John Coltrane Place (Giant Steps in Philadelphia)." In 2017, Solomon, Alfred Pollitt, and Walter Sorey composed "No Longer Bound" for the Juneteenth holiday. From 2014 to present, Solomon has contributed music to many Philadelphia Jazz Project initiatives under the direction of Homer Jackson, including "Love Notes," "The John Henry the Sounds of Progress" suite, "The Remedy Project," "Whitman at 200: New Songs of the Open Road," "We Shall: A Lyrical MLK Celebration," and many more.

**Cassandre Xavier** is a performing songwriter-guitarist, multi-genre writer, and community cultural arts organizer. She has released seven albums of music, as well as meditations for personal growth and recovery. Xavier is the founder and director of the Black Women's Arts Festival (BWAFF), an award-winning inclusive annual community cultural arts event. Founded in 2003 and funded by the University of Pennsylvania, BWAFF's features multi-media arts and performances by black women and girls at The Rotunda and other Philadelphia venues. She also founded and directs the Women's Writing & Spoken Word Series, creating a nurturing environment to celebrate women writers at local independent bookstores. She is recipient of the Leeway Foundation Transformation Award for artists who have made longstanding contributions to social change. See more of Xavier's work at [cassendrexavier.wordpress.com](http://cassendrexavier.wordpress.com)



*Call recording session photos*

top row (left to right):

photo 1 - vocalists Carrie Lessene, Shafiq Hicks, and Valerie Gay with singer/songwriter Jay Fluellen (3rd from left) recording "Strength in Our Unity"

photo 2 - pianist Micah Graves recording "Everybody" by Keisha Hutchins

photo 3 - singer/songwriter Venissa Santi

2nd row (left to right):

photo 1 - percussionist Ricardo Martino recording "Fighting for Room" by Victor Rodriguez, Jr.

photo 2 - songwriter James Solomon

photo 3 - violinist Dorothea DiGiovanni recording "Let's Be Authentic" by Cassendre Xavier

photo 4 - producer/multi-instrumentalist Anthony Tidd in his studio

3rd row (left to right):

photo 1 - singer/songwriter Cassendre Xavier recording "Let's Be Authentic"

photo 2 - keyboardist Jeff Smith, engineer Tito Orjih, and cellist Zachary Brown with singer/songwriter Namarah (center) recording "The Deferred"

photo 3 - songwriter/producer Homer Jackson

bottom row (left to right):

photo 1 - singer/songwriter Keisha Hutchins with drummer Doug Hirlinger, pianist Micah Graves, and producer Anthony Tidd

photo 2 - vocalists Bethlehem Roberson and Waverly Alston recording "STPP (School-to-Prison Pipeline)"

photo 3 - vocalist Demetria Joyce Bailey and singer/songwriter Victor Rodriguez, Jr.

*Top row/photo 1 from Carrie Lessene. All other photos from COSACOSA art at large, Inc.*

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## About COSACOSA

**COSACOSA art at large, Inc.** is a non-profit organization creating new public art and media projects specific to the concerns of Philadelphia neighborhoods in direct, long-term collaboration with city residents. COSACOSA reasserts art's original role as a catalyst for community dialogue, creative cooperation, and positive change. Since 1990, COSACOSA projects have brought together thousands of citizens of diverse backgrounds and differing abilities to learn about art, about each other, and about how to work together to transform city neighborhoods.

Learn more at [cosacosa.org](https://cosacosa.org)

### **COSACOSA Staff**

Kimberly Niemela, Director

GVGK Tang, Program Manager

Shae Payne, Learning Specialist

Carlos Aviles, Resource Coordinator

William Hilton, Sites Coordinator

### ***Call - New Protest Songs***

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COSACOSA

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