

Breonna Taylor
A letter from a mother to her daughter....



Dear Breonna:

I am not your mother and I never can be nor would I presume to be.

But, I am a mother of a daughter, her name is Emma. You and Emma were born just 36 days apart. Emma was born on April 30, 1993 and you were born just 7 weeks later on June 5, 1993.

The day you were born, I don't remember what I was doing, but I can bet my last dollar I was both sleep deprived and still in pure bliss that I was the mother of a daughter. On the day you were born my hopes and dreams were pregnant with the endless possibilities of what would lie ahead for my daughter, Emma. And I imagine your mother's hopes and dreams were as full for what lay ahead for you. Friendships, love, finding a passion that you could make a living at. A partner if you wanted one, children of your own if you wanted them.

I can be pretty sure that your mother didn't hope you would be dead before your 27th birthday.

We celebrated Emma's 27th birthday with the usual, cupcakes from Georgetown cupcakes, a venmo transfer of birthday money, and because we live a few thousand miles away from each other, a card in the mail and phone call.

Your mother can't celebrate your 27th birthday because you were killed by the police, while you slept in your bed with your partner.

There will be no cupcakes or venmo or cards or phone calls for you, today, Breonna.

Sadly, as a sociologist I know that because you were born Black and Emma was born white, your worlds would likely never collide. Emma was born into a society that valued her as white, even if not as a girl, a society that didn't see her as a threat, or a potential teenage mom. Society set few limits on her...save those imposed by their expectations of her as a girl. You were born into a world that didn't value your body. That assumed you would end up in trouble, or pregnant, or dealing drugs or going to prison. If you exceeded those expectations, which you were clearly well on your way to doing, society would deem you exceptional. If not, ordinary.

Most importantly, Emma would never, ever, ever have to worry about being shot by the police. Not anytime or anywhere. Certainly not in her own home. As far as I am aware, *no unarmed white woman has ever been shot by the police*. Though white women have done the shooting, as off-duty police officer Amber Geyger did when she shot Botham Jean, unarmed and Black, in his apartment.

I never had to worry about that. Your mother did. And, every minute that your mother worried and I didn't have to added up to days and weeks and months and years of her life and yours that I, and Emma, could spend doing other things. That's what white privilege is really about. It's about the fact that I stole time from your mother. Not directly, of course, I don't know your mother. But indirectly, through structures of racism and white supremacy. And, with those years of time I could invest in Emma and myself...helping her with homework, investing in my own career, making sure she was poised to succeed. And, she is. Magnificently. Because she is smart and works hard, but also because she had a million benefits that accrued to her instead of to you. The ultimate benefit, of course, is that she got to live to see her 27th birthday and eat cupcakes and spend birthday money and you didn't. And, I got the privilege of celebrating with her, and your mother didn't.

They say that our lives are dictated by the zipcodes we are born into, and that's true. But it's far too whitewashed an explanation. Our lives are dedicated by whether or not we benefit from the oppression of others or whether our oppression produces the benefits others reap.

I owe your mother a debt, Breonna. One I can never repay.