

**I do not know...**

Max Chaiken, summer 2021

I do not know what it's like be Black in America  
I do not know the fear for my life in routine interactions with law enforcement  
I do not know the worry that I'll appear "dangerous," because I chose to wear a hoodie  
I do not know the embarrassment of having my identity as a Jew questioned  
because of my skin color  
I do not know the horror of seeing person after person who looks like me cry out  
"I can't breathe"  
I do not know the shame of growing up in a world where I was  
"guilty  
from the moment I was born."  
I do not know even a fraction of the trauma nor the pain.

But I can listen.

I can learn.

I can read, and share, and try to imagine, and listen again.

And I can speak out, and take responsibility,

and work for a world founded on equality and justice;

A world where every person will affirm that Black Lives Matter;

A world where we live the value of "loving our neighbor as ourselves"

and all cry out in pain when "our brothers' blood calls out to us from the ground."

And so I remind myself, and I remind all those I love, who *also* do not know:

We will never know.

But we do not *have* to know

to practice sympathy

and compassion.

We do not *have* to know

to work on caring, and listening, and learning

And we can allow our lack of knowledge

to make us

curious, and compassionate;

Turning ignorance into inspiration

As we open our hearts and minds

To build a world of wholeness and justice and love