

CYPOHER

comics as eyewitness

February 2021

175 YEARS
AFTER
THE ABOLITION
OF SLAVERY

IT WAS
ABOUT
TIME!!!



Tunisia

Portugal

Uruguay

Sudan

Japan

front line defenders

cypher

/ˈsɪfər/

The dictionary definition of cypher is 'a secret or disguised way of writing'. In many ways, this is the essence of comics storytelling – the image, rather than the word, is a disguise for many words, that can convey meaning, emotion, and can re/frame an entire narrative.

Rap and hip hop culture has taken the word and ascribed a new meaning: 'an informal gathering of rappers, beatboxers and/or breakdancers in a circle, in order to jam musically together.' This, too, we find relevant to this project, in that we are bringing together artists and HRDs in freestyle collaboration of activism and art with the aim of informing, elevating and inspiring.

For us, this captures the spirit of why we are working in comics and guides how we facilitate the process of creative production.

Co-Producers:

Beldan Sezen and Adam Shapiro

Cover art by Nada Dagdoug

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adam shapiro

“Say Their Names”

This was the mantra by Black Lives Matter protesters in cities and towns across the United States for months – and really for years – as the nation witnessed the largest popular mobilization in its history in protest against systemic racism and its manifestation in police violence against Black and Brown bodies.

The movement has not been limited to the US, as the scourge of racism exists in virtually every society and manifests in everything from police violence to housing discrimination to socio-economic inequality and beyond. At the forefront – organizing these protests, developing policy alternatives and envisioning equitable futures – have been anti-racism/anti-discrimination human rights defenders who have been active long before the chants started echoing.

At Front Line Defenders, we have been listening, learning and discussing the intersection of race, representation and human rights as never before, and as an organization, we commit to standing with and supporting anti-racist movements and HRDs and their security. The flip side of the hope inspired by what we have witnessed over the last year is the dangerous and profoundly disturbing rise of white supremacist groups, which sadly is also not a new phenomenon. The danger those groups pose to movements for racial, economic, environmental and gender justice cannot be underestimated.

This issue of Cypher presents stories from Uruguay, Sudan, Tunisia and Portugal – places not necessarily in the headlines, but where struggles persist every day to confront everyday racism combined with historic and systemic discrimination. And where HRDs confront violence, threats and defamation simply because they pursue equality.

Editorial



beldan sezen

174 years after the abolition of slavery on the African continent by the Ottoman Empire; 158 years since Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation in the United States; Japan bans slavery in 1590 (with some exceptions), Lithuania in 1588.

And then there is Spain. With the “discovery” of the New World, debates erupt about who to enslave to what degree, and if you can’t enslave then implement forced labour.

Through the centuries, empires and countries around the world have enslaved all kinds of people, later revising degrees of enslavement for many reasons until ultimate abolishment (yet having to come up with other forms of cheap labor). The slave trade from Africa remains as one of the most painful since it includes the dehumanizing of a Mensch in all its utmost cruelty to justify the capture, trade and exploitation of human labor. Until today, the mechanisms of dehumanizing, ranging from crude to delicate, and therefore our justification of superiority/inferiority, are deeply embedded into our daily lives and collective memories.

It’s like confronting an abuser again and again and again. And again. Until they’re isolated, not able to deny – first in all arrogance then in stoic self-pity. Until they no longer find open ears for their lies and bravado. Until the “we” that protected them through denial and ignorance finally doesn’t fear the loss of their self-serving love; doesn’t fear to confront the lies that seemingly have served us well. Until the anger we rightfully feel is directed to the abuser not the abused. Until the price for another human’s life is no longer measured by our comfort and greed. Until then, or rather, now, Black Lives Matter.

February 2021

Tunisia

In June 2020, hundred of Tunisians gathered in the capital, Tunis, to stand in solidarity with Black Lives Matter protests in the United States; it was the first such protest in the Arab world. Tunisia has become accustomed to leading the Arab world over the last decade since it deposed its authoritarian ruler a decade ago, igniting a wave of protests and political and social movements across the Arab world and beyond.

But when it comes to stamping out racism, Tunisia is just like every other country – with a lot of work to do, including the first step of acknowledging the full scope and impact of the problem in the first place.

Anti-racism human rights defenders like Saadia Mosbah, confront daily racism that has long been normalized in language and custom. The struggle is not just addressing the institutional forms of racism from the state, but also changing the consciousness of fellow citizens. Saadia has said that racism in Tunisia is “something silent, and rampant.”

As Tunisia marks a decade since shaking the world, new protests have erupted on the streets as the promise of the revolution remains unfulfilled. And indeed, for black Tunisians, endemic racism did not stop when Ben Ali left the country.

Artists: Moez Tabia and Nada Dagdoug

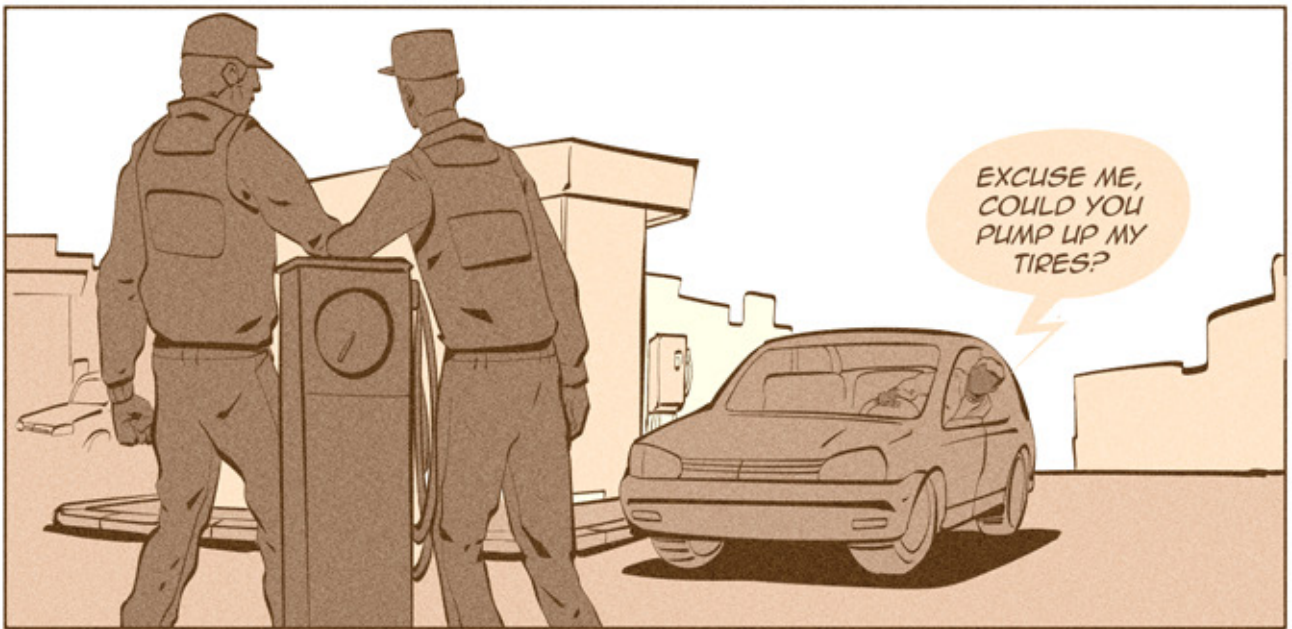
Moez Tabia is a cartoonist, illustrator, and a member of Lab619. He started his career as a storyboarder in communication companies and publishing houses, worked with associations and as a digital drawing teacher. He was selected for the exhibition of «100 Arab Artists» in Angoulême. His album “Oblation” was awarded as best manga at FIBDA.

www.artstation.com/moeztabia

Nada Dagdoug is a trained graphic designer. She is a teacher, researcher and Doctor of Sciences and Practices of Arts. Her experiences led her to follow more individual paths, by carrying out artistic experiments through illustrations and animated pictures techniques with children (the Grif Graf workshops).

nadadagdoug.ultra-book.com

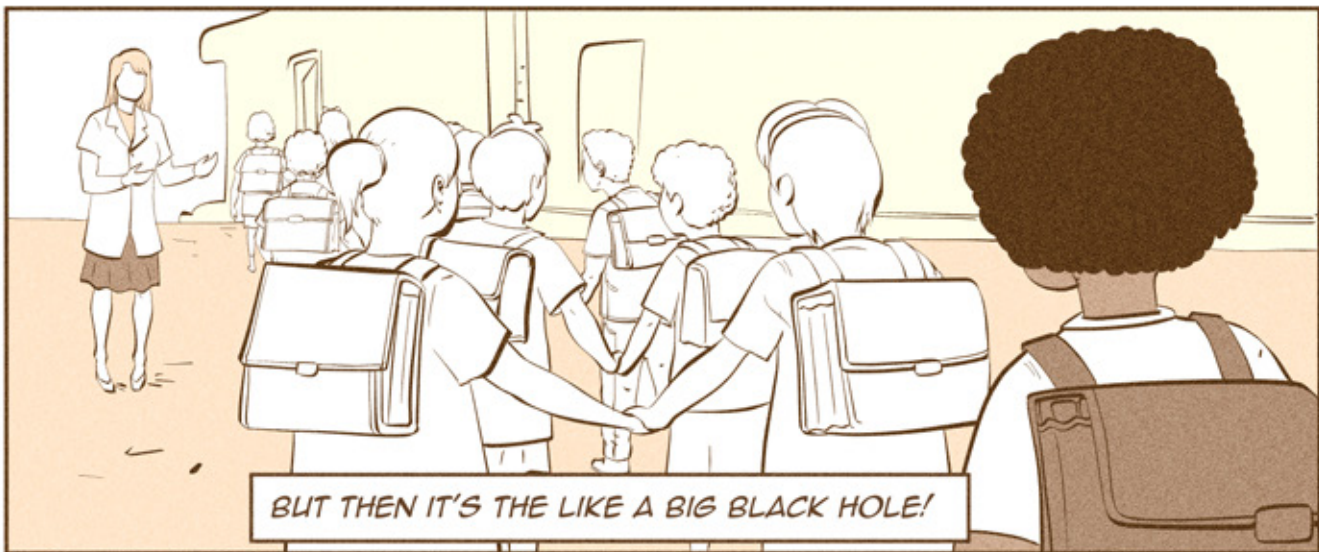
www.facebook.com/grifgrafstudio



THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL IS A HUGE DISAPPOINTMENT!



MEETING NEW FRIENDS IS EXCITING...



BUT THEN IT'S THE LIKE A BIG BLACK HOLE!

I WAS ALWAYS THE LAST ONE TO ENTER BECAUSE PEOPLE DIDN'T WANT TO COME IN LINE WITH ME AND HOLD MY HAND.

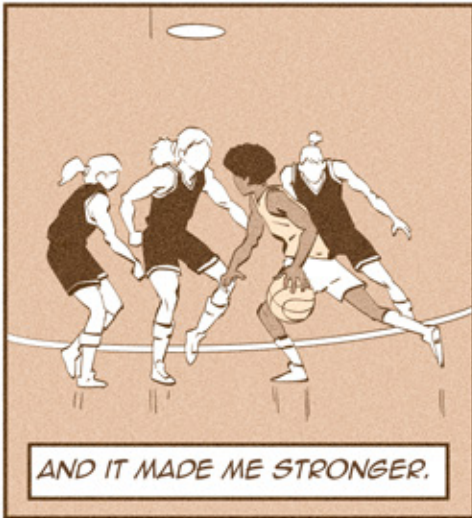


IT WAS THE SAME FOR MY SON.

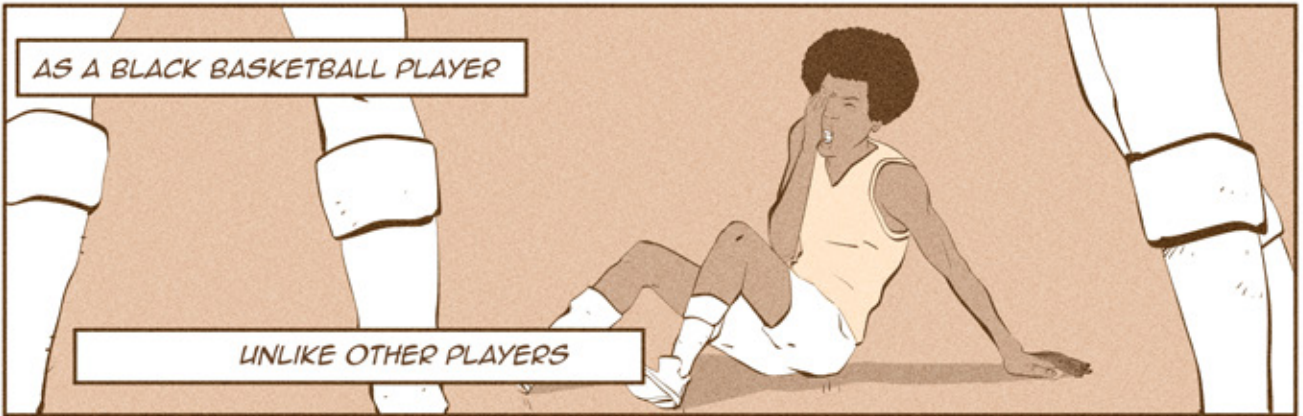
IT WAS THE SAME FOR MY BROTHER.



PLAYING SPORTS DURING MY HIGH SCHOOL YEARS HELPED ME BUILD MY CHARACTER.

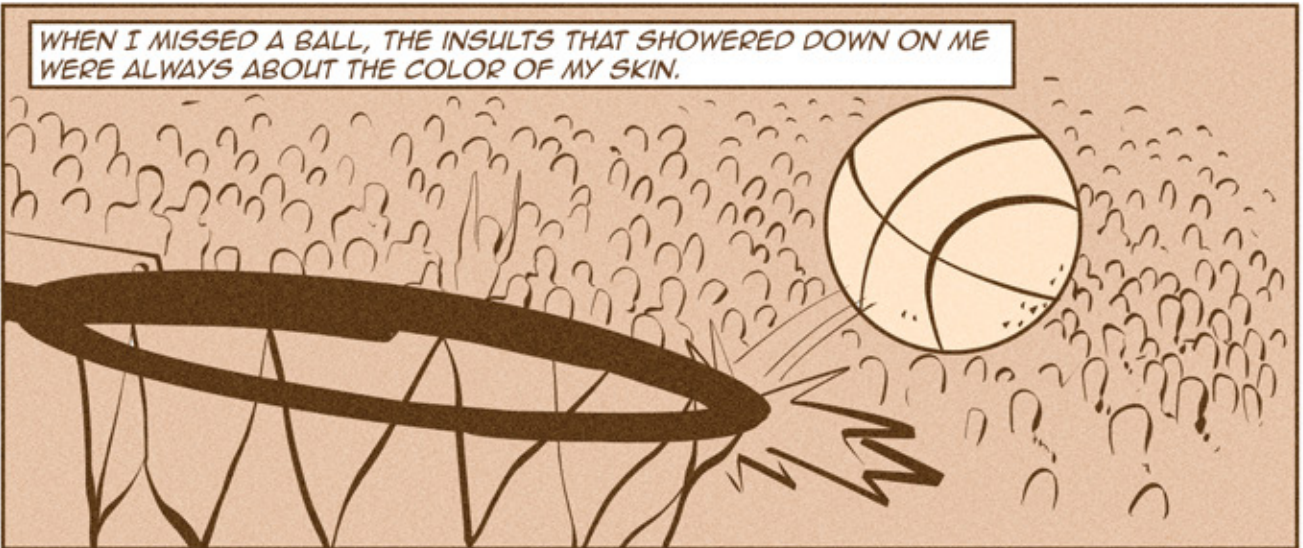


AND IT MADE ME STRONGER.



AS A BLACK BASKETBALL PLAYER

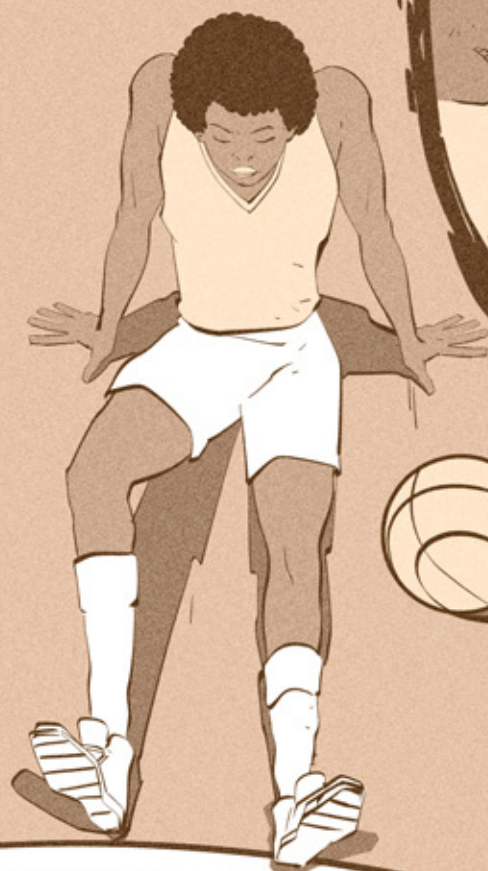
UNLIKE OTHER PLAYERS



WHEN I MISSED A BALL, THE INSULTS THAT SHOWERED DOWN ON ME WERE ALWAYS ABOUT THE COLOR OF MY SKIN.

MY SON IS MY GREATEST PAIN...

HIS ASSAULT WAS A SERIOUS INCIDENT.



THIS GAVE ME THE WILL TO NEVER GIVE UP THE FIGHT!

I DECIDED ONCE AND FOR ALL TO SPEAK OUT AGAINST RACISM.

I FOUNDED "MNEPTY" TO FIGHT, AT ALL COSTS, THE DISCRIMINATIONS THAT BLACK PEOPLE HAVE ALWAYS SUFFERED IN TUNISIA.



AN INJUSTICE THAT WE CAN SEE AT ALL LEVELS: STRUCTURAL, HEALTH, EDUCATIONAL, NOT TO MENTION THE MILLIONS OF SLAVES DEPORTED DURING THE TRANS-SAHARAN SLAVE TRADE.

THE LIST IS LONG BUT WE NEVER TALK ABOUT IT, JUST LIKE WE NEVER TALK ABOUT SCHOOL DROPOUTS FOR BLACK CHILDREN OR INJUSTICE IN TERMS OF HOUSING, ACCESS TO WORK.

NEITHER DO WE TALK ABOUT THEIR PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUES, AND EVEN LESS ABOUT THE FOURTEEN CENTURIES OF SLAVERY AND THE MORE THAN 10 MILLION SLAVES DEPORTED DURING THE TRANS-SAHARAN SLAVE TRADE.

ON THIS OCCASION MNEPTY ORGANIZED, AMONG OTHER THINGS, A VOX POP OPERATION CALLED "TAÂRAFCHI" (DID YOU KNOW THAT?) TO ASK PEOPLE WHAT THE 23RD OF JANUARY REPRESENTS.

THE 23RD OF JANUARY COMMEMORATES THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY IN 1846. IN 2019 TUNISIA PROCLAIMED THAT DATE AS THE "NATIONAL DAY FOR THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY".

تعارف فتنشي

23RD OF
JANUARY 1846

MOST OF THEM, OF COURSE, DIDN'T KNOW. ONE OF THE ASSOCIATION'S PRIORITIES, THEREFORE IS TO FIGHT AGAINST THIS IGNORANCE, AT THE EDUCATIONAL LEVEL, BY RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT RACISM AMONG THE YOUNG PUBLIC.

TUNISIA LIKES TO SAY THAT IT IS AFRICAN, BUT IN FACTS IT DOES NOT PROCLAIM EITHER ITS AFRICANNESS OR ITS MULTIETHNIC CHARACTER. MOREOVER, THIS MULTICULTURALITY IS NOT ENSHRINED IN THE NEW POST-"REVOLUTION" CONSTITUTION.



MNEMTY'S ACTIONS ALSO CONSIST OF PROMOTING THE EXEMPLARY PATHS OF BLACK PEOPLE, IN DENOUNCING ANY RACIST ACT AND IN DEVELOPING CIVIC AWARENESS OF BLACK PEOPLE AND THEIR SENSE OF BELONGING TO THE AFRICAN CONTINENT TO WHICH TUNISIA GAVE ITS NAME *IFRIQIYA*.

MY CAREER AS A FLIGHT ATTENDANT WAS A
MIX OF DISCRIMINATION BUT ALSO GRATITUDE.



BUT THE TUNISIAN REMAINS RACIST TOWARD THE TUNISIAN

SAADIA AND M'NEMTY HAVE A LOT ON THEIR PLATE. RECENTLY, TUNISIA ADOPTED A LAW CRIMINALIZING RACISM (LAW 50 OF 23 OCTOBER 2018), FOLLOWING AN INITIATIVE LED BY THE FORMER HEAD OF GOVERNMENT, MR. YOUSSEF CHAHED. ANOTHER INITIATIVE LED BY EUROMED RIGHTS AND BRINGING TOGETHER A FEW ASSOCIATIONS FAILED. DIDN'T THEY EVEN CONSULT BLACK TUNISIANS. BUT DURING A PRESS CONFERENCE I SPOKE OUT, I TOLD THEM:

WHAT!?

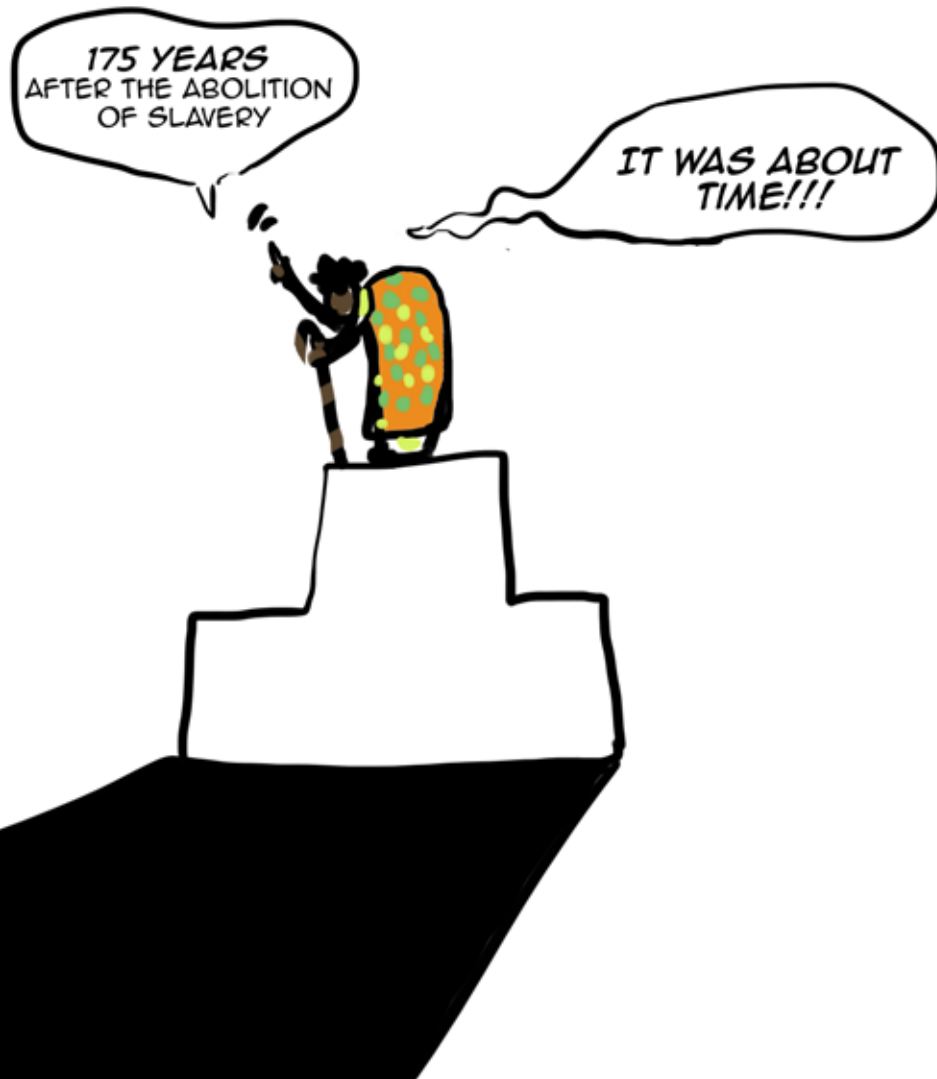
YOU ARE MAKING A LAW ABOUT ME WITHOUT EVEN TALKING TO ME?

SO FOR ME
THIS LAW
IS NULL AND VOID

THIS REFERS TO GANDHI AND MANDELA WHO SAID
"EVERYTHING THAT IS DONE FOR ME, WITHOUT ME, IS DONE AGAINST ME"



HOWEVER, OTHER FACTS INSPIRE OPTIMISM:
ON THE 14TH OF OCTOBER 2020, A COURT IN
SOUTHERN TUNISIA (MEDENINE) SUPPORTED THE
REQUEST OF AN 84-YEAR-OLD CITIZEN WHO WANTED TO
REMOVE THE FATHER'S NAME "ATIG" WHICH PRECEDED
HIS LAST NAME. "ATIG" MEANS "EMANCIPATED"
(A REFERENCE TO FORMER ENSLAVEMENT).



175 YEARS
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DENIAL IS A STRONG CONCRETE WALL. THIS IS THE REAL FIGHT.

EDUCATION MUST START IN SCHOOLS SO BLACK-SKINNED TUNISIAN WOMEN DON'T HAVE TO GO THROUGH HELL. LAWS TODAY, LIKE LAW 50 OF OCTOBER 2018, DO EXIST, WE ARE PROUD OF THEM BUT THE QUESTION TODAY REMAINS:

CAN WE CHANGE SOCIETY BY ISSUING DECREES?





M'nemty

Portugal

In August 2020, local media reported that a march in front of the offices of SOS Racismo in Lisbon seemed similar to a “Ku klux klan style parade”, where individuals were seen carrying torches and wearing white masks. For Mamadou Ba, this was just the latest in ongoing threats against him and other black Portuguese activists and political figures.

While other countries in Europe have made headlines internationally for the rise of right-wing and even neo-Nazi political parties and movements, Portugal is no stranger to race-based violence from both the state and from society. Since 2012, SOS Racismo has collected data on more than 700 racially motivated crimes.

With the black community in Portugal becoming more and more ‘visible’ with artists, athletes, politicians and activists coming to the fore in all parts of society, right-wing groups are mobilizing using race-based ideologies to target and attack the community. At the same time, systemic racism in the country’s institutions is coming under new scrutiny, particularly violence from the police, as similar efforts are underway across in Europe and the US.

In previous years, racist violence was largely ignored by society and by the government. After the August incident and other attacks against members of the black community, the country’s president vowed that there would be ‘zero tolerance’ for racism, while one of the largest anti-racist protests was held in the capital. After decades of denial, racism is starting to be called out in Portugal, even if activists like Mamadou are under greater threat than ever before.

Text and drawings by Nuno Saraiva

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Mamadou Ba

"LIKE THE CHARACTERS FROM 'OS FLAGELADOS DO VENTO LESTE', DYING AND RESURRECTING EVERY YEAR TO THE DESPAIR OF THOSE WANTING TO STOP HIS MARCH, STUBBORNLY, MAMADOU STANDS UP.

THIS IS NOT THE BIOGRAPHY OF MAMADOU BA, HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST AND TRANSLATOR BY PROFESSION, THE LIFE OF A MAN IN A STATE OF WAR AGAINST DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM CAN'T BE FULLY COMPRISED IN THE PAGES OF A COMIC.

N.S.

THIS IS THE STORY OF A JOURNEY, A JOURNEY THAT DEPARTED FROM ITS ROOTS IN SENEGAL AND CONTINUED IN PORTUGAL AS A PORTUGUESE CITIZEN, HIS BELOVED COUNTRY SINCE 1997. IN WHICH RECIPROCITY FOR HIS AFFECTIONS HAS BEEN UNEQUAL AND INCONSTANT SINCE THEN.

BEING AN UNEVEN LOVE STORY, WHAT WE'LL TELL HERE IS THE UGLIEST PART OF THIS NONSTOP MARCH: A JOURNEY WITH PLENTY OF OBSTACLES IN THE FORM OF THREATS.

AS WITH MANY LOVE STORIES, THIS ONE STARTS IN A PARTY, THE SCENE BEING THE LISBON NEIGHBOURHOOD OF MOURARIA; THE PROTAGONISTS BEING THE CULTURAL ENTERTAINMENT AND EQUIPMENT MANAGEMENT ENTERPRISE (EGEAC*) AND THE LISBON CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT, IN 2004



EMPRESA DE GESTÃO DE EQUIPAMENTOS E ANIMAÇÃO CULTURAL

EGEAC HAS REQUESTED TO THIS AUTHORITY A TECHNICAL OPINION ABOUT THE INSTALLATION OF A PUBLIC INSTALLATION IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD FOR THE TRADITIONAL ST. ANTHONY FESTIVITIES WHICH LIVEN UP THE CITY DURING JUNE EVERY YEAR.



THE ANSWER FROM THE COMMANDER JOSÉ RODRIGUES WAS DIRECT, STATING THAT "THE PEOPLE WHO USUALLY FREQUENT THESE ZONES ARE, MAINLY, BLACK SKINNED, DRUG ADDICTED, AND PEOPLE PROSTITUTING THEMSELVES".



HE ADDED, "THESE FOLKS BRING THEIR ORIGINAL CUSTOMS AND BEHAVIOR WITH THEM, WHICH, I ASSUME, HAS BROUGHT EVEN MORE PROMISCUITY TO THAT NEIGHBOURHOOD".



AS SOON AS THEY READ THOSE HATE-FILLED WORDS, JOSÉ FALCÃO AND MAMADOU BÁ, WHO LEAD SOS RACISMO, ISSUED A PRESS RELEASE STATING THAT "THE LISBON CITY HALL CHAMBER CAN'T ALLOW AN OPENLY RACIST AND XENOPHOBIC COMMANDER TO LEAD THE CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT".



IN AN ACT OF TREMENDOUS POLITICAL COURAGE, THE PRIME MINISTER AT THE TIME, PEDRO SANTANA LOPES, TOOK THE DECISION OF FIRING ALMEIDA RODRIGUES "REGARDLESS OF OPINIONS OR DEMANDS FROM ANYONE ELSE, AS THIS IS AN OBVIOUS DECISION TO MAKE," WHICH STARTED FROM STATEMENTS THAT REVEAL A "MENTALITY

THAT EXISTS IN THE PORTUGUESE POLICE SERVICES, RESPONSIBLE FOR INCREASING SOCIAL TENSION IN GREATER LISBON.



OUTRAGED, THE POLICE OFFICER ASSOCIATION CONTESTED THE DECISION, INSISTING THAT THE PROCESS "SHOULD BE DEALT WITH IN ANOTHER WAY" AND "NEVER THROUGH THE MEDIA", AND ACCUSING SANTANA OF BEING "IRRATIONAL".



SOS RACISMO, WHICH DISCLOSED TO THE PUBLIC THE CONTENT OF THAT TECHNICAL OPINION FOR A SIMPLE FEST, WERE 'PUT ON BLACKLIST' BY SOME COPS.

AND IF THIS LIST WAS BLACK, MAMADOU WOULD FIT IN LIKE A GLOVE.



A LITTLE OVER A YEAR HE RECEIVED HIS FIRST THREAT, AS IN A BAD MOVIE SCRIPT, ON A SUNNY BEACH.

IT WOULDN'T BE JUST ANY SUNDAY, BUT THE 10TH OF JUNE, A NATIONAL HOLIDAY IN TUNISIA, OF CAMÕES AND THE PORTUGUESE COMMUNITIES. IT WAS AT THE CARCAVELOS BEACH, ON THE COAST NEAR LISBON.



ALL OF PORTUGAL WATCHED THE NEWS ABOUT A "MOB RAID" ON THEIR TELEVISIONS. FIVE HUNDRED BLACK YOUNGSTERS PILLAGING AND RAIDING ALL THE PEOPLE AT THE BEACH. "SECURITY FORCES WERE SURPRISED", SAID THE POLICE SOURCE TO THE NEWS REPORTER, AND APPEALED TO THE POLITICIANS "TO READ THESE SIGNS".



BUT THE MESSAGE - AND IMAGES - OF AN ORGANIZED GROUP OF HUNDREDS OF VANDALS PILLAGING THE BEACH OF CARCAVELOS DIDN'T MATCH THE TRUTH.



AND YET, THE NEXT DAY, EVEN THE PUBLIC SECURITY POLICE (PSP) SENT A DOCUMENT TO THE CONSTITUTIONAL, LIBERTY AND RIGHTS COMMITTEE ON THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, IN WHICH THE EXISTENCE OF A "MOB RAID" WAS DENIED.



IN FACT, FIVE HUNDRED YOUTH HAD COME ONTO THE BEACH, THOUGH TO PROTECT THEMSELVES FROM A MUCH SMALLER GROUP OF INDIVIDUALS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISTURBANCE AND ATTACKS; THIS IS WHAT WITNESSES REPORTED.



BUT FOR SEVERAL DAYS, JOURNALISTS, POLICE AND POLITICIANS FED INTO FAKE NEWS, ALARMINING AND DECEIVING THE WHOLE COUNTRY. THANKS TO THE DOCUMENTARY "THE MOB THAT NEVER HAPPENED," IN WHICH MAMADOU, AMONG OTHER PEOPLE, PARTICIPATED IN THE PRODUCTION, THE NATIONAL HEAD OF THE PSP WAS FORCED TO RECOGNIZE THAT THIS ENDED UP BEING A CONSPIRACY TO DECEIVE.

WAY DIFFERENT FROM THAT WAS THE KUKU CASE, A TRAGIC EPISODE THAT HAS NEVER HEALED IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY'S COLLECTIVE MEMORY. THIS HAPPENED WITH NO WITNESSES ON THE NIGHT OF THE 4TH OF JANUARY IN 2009. A PSP PATROL DETERMINED THAT A CAR THEY OBSERVED WAS STOLEN. INSIDE THE CAR, THERE WERE FIVE BLACK YOUTH.



A PURSUIT FOLLOWED WHEREIN THE YOUNGESTS DECIDED TO RUN ON FOOT. ONE OF THEM, ELSON SANCHES, KNOWN AS KUKU BY HIS FRIENDS, 14 YEARS OLD AND STUDENT IN A TECHNICAL SCHOOL AT THE REBOLEIRA, WAS TRAPPED NEAR A DITCH BY AN OFFICER SEPARATED FROM THE OTHER POLICE.



MINUTES LATER HE WAS DEAD. THE FIRST POLICE REPORT DETERMINED THAT THE VICTIM WAS SHOT FROM LESS THAN 6 FEET, YET ANOTHER FORENSICS REPORT CONFIRMED THAT THE KUKU WAS SHOT IN THE HEAD FROM LESS THAN 1 FOOT AWAY. THERE WERE NO WITNESSES.



THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION (MPA) TOOK THE OFFICER RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SHOTS TO THE COURT, IN A TRIAL WHICH LASTED FOR ALMOST 4 YEARS. IN THE END, HE WAS ACQUITTED. OUTRAGED, MAMADOU PRONOUNCED: "THE JUDGE CLEARED CHARGES AGAINST KUKU'S KILLER, LEGITIMATING POLICE VIOLENCE AND RACISM".



ON 6 FEBRUARY 2016, ANOTHER FAKE NEWS EPISODE STARTED: THE GHOST INVASION IN THE PRECINCT OF ALFRAGIDE. "A DOZEN YOUNG PEOPLE TRIED TO INVADE THE PSP PRECINCT IN ALFRAGIDE AROUND 2PM ON THURSDAY", WAS REPORTED BY SEVERAL MEDIA OUTLETS. IN REALITY, A GROUP OF YOUNG PEOPLE CONCERNED ABOUT THE ARREST OF A FRIEND IN THE COVA DA MOURA NEIGHBOURHOOD WENT TO THAT PRECINCT TO CHECK ON HIM.



THEY ALL ENDED UP ARRESTED AND VIOLENTLY ASSAULTED. FOUR YEARS LATER, THE POLICE WERE TAKEN TO COURT AND EIGHT AGENTS WERE CONVICTED, THOUGH NONE CONVICTED OF TORTURE. THE AGGRAVATION CHARGE OF RACIAL MOTIVATION WAS DISCARDED AS WELL. NEVERTHELESS, THIS WAS STILL A HISTORIC SENTENCE, AS EIGHT AGENTS FROM THE PSP WERE CONVICTED OF AGGRESSION, INJURY AND KIDNAPPING OF BLACK YOUTH!



IN JANUARY 2019, A VIDEO CIRCULATED ON SOCIAL MEDIA SHOWING PSP AGENTS COMMITTING VIOLENT AGGRESSION AGAINST A FAMILY IN THE JAMAICA NEIGHBOURHOOD OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF SEIXAL. THIS SORT OF INTERVENTION WASN'T NEW OR AN ISOLATED CASE BY THE POLICE FORCES.



SOS RACISMO, AFTER GOING TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND LISTENING TO THE TESTIMONIALS OF THE VICTIMS AND CITIZENS WHO WITNESSED THE POLICE INTERVENTION, EMPHATICALLY CONDEMNED THE ACTIONS OF THE PSP AND DEMANDED THAT THE OFFICES BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE. THE EPISODE REVEALED THAT THE POLICE HAD A MODUS OPERANDI TO RAID NEIGHBORHOODS INHABITED BY BLACK AND ROMANI PEOPLE. EVERYTHING POINTED TO SUMMARY JUDGMENT.



BEFORE THAT, ON HIS PERSONAL FACEBOOK, MAMADOU WROTE ABOUT THIS VIDEO ADDRESSING "POLICE VIOLENCE", CLASSIFYING THESE ACTS AS "COP'S SHIT" AND SPEAKING OUT AGAINST THOSE THAT HE CONSIDERED "STUPID FALLACY FROM SOME PSEUDO ENLIGHTENED RADICALS".



PISSED OFF BY THESE STATEMENTS, THE POLICE SYNDICATE FILED A LAWSUIT AGAINST HIM. MAMADOU TOOK TO FACEBOOK SAYING HE'S NOT SURPRISED: "I DON'T REGRET ANY OF THE WORK I DO WHILE COMBATING RACISM".

Não me arrependo de nenhuma das responsabilidades que assumi no combate ao racismo.

THESE STATEMENTS SPARKLED ALL KINDS OF COMMENTARY ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND ALSO THE VILEST LEVEL OF HATE SPEECH.

BEYOND THE GENERAL HATE SPEECH, HOWEVER, MAMADOU HAD A SPECIFIC PROBLEM WITH THE NATIONAL RENOVATION PARTY (PNR IN PORTUGUESE), MADE UP OF ULTRA-NATIONALISTS AND SKINHEADS, WHICH HAS BEEN PART OF THE MAINSTREAM POLITICAL SCENE SINCE 2006 TO FLAUNT THEIR OLD SALAZARIST SYMBOLS ALTOGETHER WITH NAZI SALUTATIONS.



AFTER SOME PROTESTS TO CALL FOR IMMIGRANT DEPORTATION, ON SEPTEMBER 2014 THE PNR CONVENED A MAJOR GATHERING IN THE MARTIM MONIZ SQUARE, THE MOST MULTICULTURAL VENUE IN LISBON, ENTERING THE MOURARIA MALL IN PROTEST "AGAINST THE DISFIGUREMENT OF THE PORTUGUESE IDENTITY BEING SUBDUED BY USES AND CUSTOMS OPPOSITE TO OUR TRADITIONS."



IN NOVEMBER 2016, IN MARTIM MONIZ SQUARE, DURING AN AUTHORIZED DEMONSTRATION UNDER THE BANNER:

"EQUAL RIGHTS AND IDs FOR EVERYONE", ORGANIZED BY THE IMMIGRANT SOLIDARITY FOR THE CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS EQUITY, THE PNR ORGANIZED A COUNTER-PROTEST CLAIMING "IMMIGRANT INVASION, SOCIAL JUSTICE TO THE PORTUGUESE PEOPLE".



MAMADOU WITNESSED THE ATTACKS PERPETRATED BY THE PNR ACTIVISTS OUTSIDE THE POLICE BARRIER. MAMADOU HIMSELF WAS ALSO THREATENED. "WHAT SHOCKS ME IS THAT THE POLICE DIDN'T DO ANYTHING IN ADVANCE", CRITICIZING THE POLICE PASSIVENESS.

LATER, AFTER THE INCIDENT IN THE JAMAICAN NEIGHBORHOOD AND MAMADOU'S MEDIA APPEARANCES CALLING OUT THE POLICE, PNR ACTIVISTS AMBUSHED MAMADOU TWICE. THEY ACCUSE HIM OF BEING A TRAITOR, WILLING TO DESTROY SOCIETY, WHILE LIVING ON WELFARE OF THE PEOPLE.



ON JANUARY 15TH 2020 MAMADOU RECEIVED AN AWFUL THREAT BY EMAIL:

THIS IS A MESSAGE ADDRESSED TO THE MAN CALLED MAMADOU BÁ. LEAVE OUR COUNTRY. REPEAT: THIS IS THE FIRST AND THE LAST WARNING FROM OUR SIDE. TAKE YOUR FAMILY BACK TO YOUR HOME COUNTRY. YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED.



AFTER BEING THREATENED, MAMADOU ASKED FOR PROTECTION AND ISSUED A CRIMINAL COMPLAINT AGAINST THE PNR. AROUND THIS TIME, THE PNR CHANGED THEIR NAME TO "ERGUE-TE" (LIFT UP) FOR, IN THEIR OWN WORDS, "REFRESH THEIR IMAGE".



IN 2017, A STATUE FOR THE PRIEST ANTÓNIO VIEIRA WAS UNVEILED; THE PRIEST WAS A MAJOR FIGURE IN PORTUGUESE HISTORY AND LITERACY. HE WAS ALSO KNOWN AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF "SELECTIVE SLAVERY", CONTRIBUTING TO THE COLONIZATION OF MILLIONS OF AFRICAN LIVES AND TO THE GENOCIDE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN THE AMERICAS.



AN ACTIVIST COLLECTIVE CALLED DESCOLONIZANDO GOES TO THE STATUE TO HOLD "AN HOMMAGE TO THE MEMORY OF ENSLAVED AFRICANS AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN THE AMERICAS" DOING "A PERFORMANCE USING FLOWERS, CANDLES, POETRY AND DANCE".



HOWEVER, THEY FOUND THE STATUE BLOCKED BY SOME SKINHEADS FROM PNR AND OTHER NEO-NAZI GANGS INCLUDING THE HAMMERSKINS. DESPITE THE PROVOCATION, THE ACTIVISTS, MAMADOU INCLUDED, DIDN'T RESPOND AND THE INCIDENT ENDED RIGHT THERE.



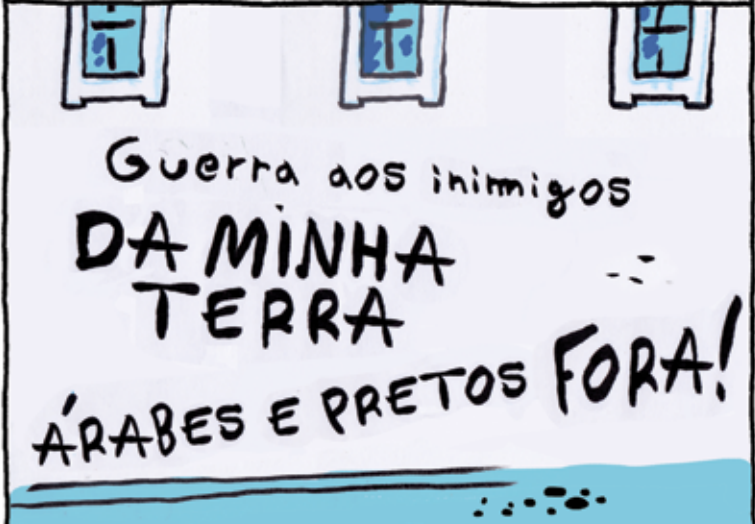
IN JUNE 2020, FOLLOWING THE MURDER OF GEORGE FLOYD AND THE PROTESTS THAT FOLLOWED IN THE USA, SEVERAL STATUES RELATED TO RACISM AND SLAVERY WERE DEFACTED AND TAKEN DOWN ALL AROUND THE WORLD.



THE STATUE OF PRIEST ANTÓNIO VIEIRA IS ALSO VANDALIZED AND EVEN BEFORE ANY MEDIA OUTLET REPORTS IT, PNR SOCIAL MEDIA AND OTHER NEO NAZI GROUPS REPORT THAT ANTIRACIST ACTIVISTS WERE RESPONSIBLE.



YET THE PROPAGANDA WAS CLEARLY EXPOSED, AND THE ALLEGED "ANTIRACIST GRAFFITIS" THEORY WAS DEBUNKED. THE GRAFFITI LEFT ON THE STATUE READ: WAR TO THE ENEMIES OF MY LAND ARABS AND BLACKS AWAY!



ON 4 AUGUST 2020, A KIND OF "KU KLUX KLAN PARADE" WAS HELD. IN THE DEAD OF THE NIGHT, A GROUP OF TWENTY MEN AND WOMEN WITH WHITE MASKS COVERING THEIR FACE AND WIELDING TORCHES, GATHERED IN FRONT OF THE SOS RACISMO MAIN OFFICE. THEY SAID THEY WERE PAYING "HOMMAGE TO COPS KILLED IN SERVICE".



AUTHORITIES INVESTIGATED THIS ILLEGAL CONCENTRATION AND ACT OF INTIMIDATION IN FRONT OF SOS RACISMO, BUT THEY OPTED TO NOT TAKE ANY ACTION. MEDIA OUTLETS TRIED TO CONTACT THE MPA AND THE PSP ABOUT THE CASE, BUT THEY DIDN'T RESPOND.



DAYS BEFORE THAT, ON 6 AUGUST, MAMADOU RECEIVED AN EMAIL ABOUT "THE FORMATION OF A NEW FAR-RIGHT MILITIA THAT WOULD BE IN CHARGE OF: ANY TIME THAT A NATIONALIST WOULD BE ARRESTED, AN ANTIRACIST WOULD BE KILLED".



ON 12 AUGUST, A CLEAR THREAT:

"A 48-HOUR DEADLINE HAS BEEN ASSIGNED FOR THE ANTI-FASCIST AND ANTI-RACIST PEOPLE ON THIS LIST TO RESIGN FROM YOUR POLITICAL AFFAIRS AND LEAVE THE PORTUGUESE TERRITORY. "



MAMADOU WAS NAMED ON THIS LIST, AS WELL AS 6 OTHER MEMBERS OF ANTI-FASCIST MOVEMENTS AND TWO BLACK CONGRESSWOMEN.

ACCORDING TO RECENT INVESTIGATIONS, THESE "KKK" GROUPS, FOUNDED BY THE NATIONAL RESISTANCE (RN), OR THE NEW ORDER OF AVIS (PROBABLY A FICTIONAL NAME) WERE COMPOSED OF FORMER MEMBERS FROM THE PORTUGAL HAMMERSKINS, FORMER MILITANTS FROM THE PNR AND CURRENT MILITANTS FROM THE CHEGA (ENOUGH) PARTY.



CHEGA, A PARTY ON RISE LED BY BY ANDRÉ VENTURA, A FORMER SPORTS COMMENTATOR WHO CAPTIVATED RACIST AND HOMOPHOBE PEOPLE WITH HIS SKILLFUL SPEECH, IS OFFICIALLY SUPPORTED BY THE EUROPE'S RIGHT-WING: VOX, LEGA NORD DE SALVINI AND MARINE LE PEN.



"IT'S UNACCEPTABLE, A PUBLIC SPACE ALLOWS KU KLUX KLAN-STYLE PARADES AND DEATH THREATS TO ACTIVISTS AND POLITICIANS. WE ARE WITNESSING THE RISE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL TERRORISM. EVEN WORSE, WE HAVE BEEN WATCHING THE RISE OF RHETORIC FROM ANDRÉ VENTURA, WHO HASN'T SUFFERED ANY POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES, AS HE BECAME A INSTITUTIONAL MEGAPHONE FOR RACISM", EXPLAINS MAMADOU.

MAMADOU BA,
ANTI-RACIST MILITANT
BY CONVICTION
AND CONDITION.



HIS FUEL FOR THIS
UNSTOPPABLE JOURNEY
IS HIS LOVE FOR EQUALITY
WHICH, IN THE END,
IS THE LOVE
FOR HUMANITY.

A JOURNEY OF
STRUGGLE,

ALWAYS!!!

Japan

Racism and xenophobia is often dismissed as a non-issue in Japan. Yet Japanese citizens who are not 'Jun Japa' (literally "true Japanese") are frequently subject to 'stop and frisk' procedures; out of nowhere interrogations in public that cause distress and embarrassment.

"Japan has a 99 percent conviction rate," according to Terry Write, a professional dancer who grew up in Brooklyn and lives in Japan, "which means that if they want me to go away, I can go away. If they want to, they can take my home, my kids, everything away from me, just like that. Maybe I'm not going to die, but that's a different kind of death".

With the killing of George Floyd, thousands of protesters in Tokyo took part in Black Lives Matter marches pointing out that Japan needed to own up to its own problems with race.

Black Lives Matter Tokyo was founded on 1 June 2020 by a half-dozen youths – most of whom are students at Temple University in Tokyo. In less than two weeks, the group gained the support of several thousand followers on social media.

blacklivesmattertokyo.org
[Instagram](#)

Artist: Mmyoi

Mmyoi is a Brazilian artist living in Japan, currently producing a romance/fantasy webcomic called "The Bride of the Fox". She believes more Afro-latin americans should dream about being comic artists and become capable of speaking up about their experiences through their art.

[Linktr.ee](https://linktr.ee/mmyoi)

BLACK LIVES MATTER

T O K Y O

OUR MISSION IS TO STRENGTHEN OUR TIES WITH THE JAPANESE COMMUNITY THROUGH ANTI-RACIST ACTION, COMMUNITY OUTREACH EFFORTS, AND EDUCATION OF BLACK HISTORY AND THE HISTORY OF RACISM IN ORDER TO MOVE TOWARDS A MORE CULTURALLY DIVERSE AND UNDERSTANDING ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL

WE USE OUR ONLINE PLATFORMS TO HOST EVENTS THAT AIM TO EDUCATE AND AMPLIFY THE EXPERIENCE OF BLACK PEOPLE. CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE FOR DETAILS ON OUR ACTIVITIES!



DESPITE COMMON BELIEF THAT RACISM DOESN'T EXIST IN JAPAN, MANY FOREIGNERS HERE, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO ARE BLACK AND POC, EXPERIENCE RACIAL BIASES AND PREJUDICE DIRECTED TOWARDS THEM. THEY OFTEN LIVE IN A CONSTANT STRESS OF HAVING TO "PROVE" THEY ARE NOT DOING ANYTHING WRONG.

THIS IS JAIME SMITH'S ACCOUNT ON THE MANY TIMES THEY WERE STOPPED BY THE POLICE IN JAPAN AND IN THE USA...



THE FIRST TIME
I WAS EVER
STOPPED
IN JAPAN
BY POLICE,
I WAS
LIVING IN
TOKUSHIMA
PREFECTURE



IT WAS NIGHTTIME
AND POURING DOWN RAINING



I WAS ON
MY BIKE
TRYING
TO GET
HOME

ZUP



WHEN I HEAR
"EXCUSE ME"
IN JAPANESE

SUMIMASEN!

TWO POLICE OFFICERS ASKED ME TO STOP FOR A BIKE CHECK



THEY WANTED TO CHECK MY BIKE REGISTRATION, IF IT WAS REGISTERED IN MY NAME OR IF IT WAS A STOLEN BIKE...

PLEASE, CHECK THE BIKE NUMBER **** FOR ME

IS THIS BIKE YOURS? IS IT REGISTERED IN YOUR NAME?

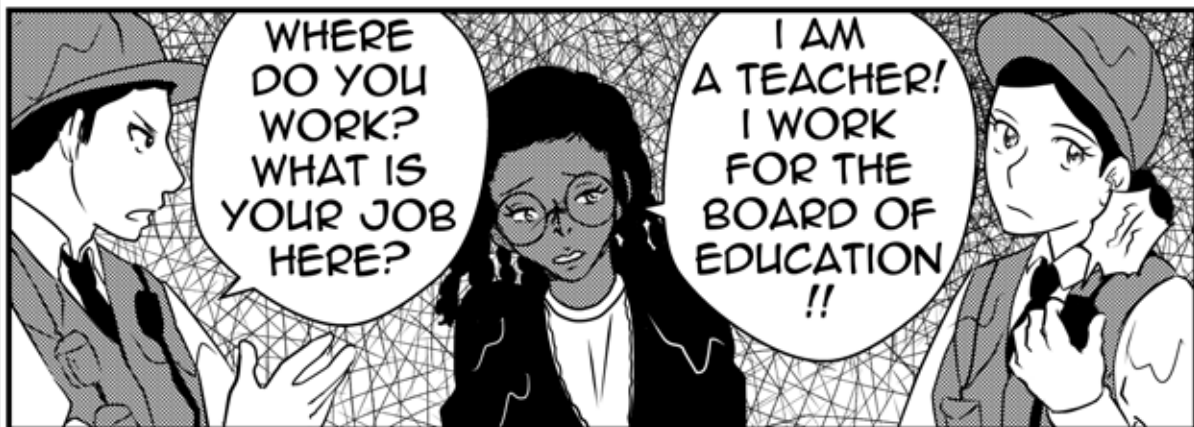
NO, IT'S OWNED BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION ...



THEY DIDN'T SEEM TO KNOW THE NAME OF THE DEPARTMENT I WAS WORKING AT, AND TRIED TO COMMUNICATE IN ENGLISH

WHERE DO YOU WORK? WHAT IS YOUR JOB HERE?

I AM A TEACHER! I WORK FOR THE BOARD OF EDUCATION !!





APPARENTLY
THE BIKE
BELONGS
TO THE
CITY HALL'S
BOARD OF
EDUCATION!

WHY DIDN'T
YOU SAY IT
BELONGED
TO THE
CITY HALL
FROM THE
START?



YOU ARE
FREE TO
GO NOW,
THANK YOU
FOR YOUR
COOPERATION

I HAD MY
LIGHTS ON
AND
I WAS
FOLLOWING
THE ROAD
RULES,
SO WHY?



WHY
DID THEY
HAVE TO
MAKE ME
STOP IN
THE MIDDLE
OF THE RAIN
TO ASK
WHERE MY
BIKE WAS
REGISTERED
TO?



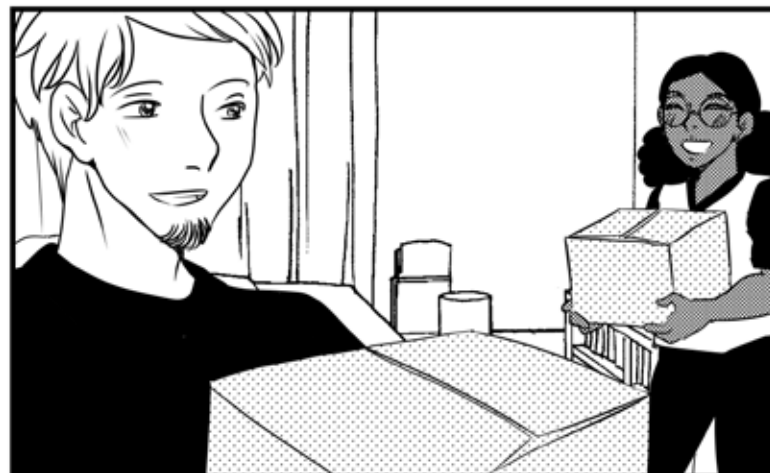
THIS WAS ONE OF
A FEW TIMES
I WAS STOPPED
BY THE POLICE
IN TOKUSHIMA,
BUT...



I GOT STOPPED
A LOT MORE OFTEN
IN THE GREATER
TOKYO AREA

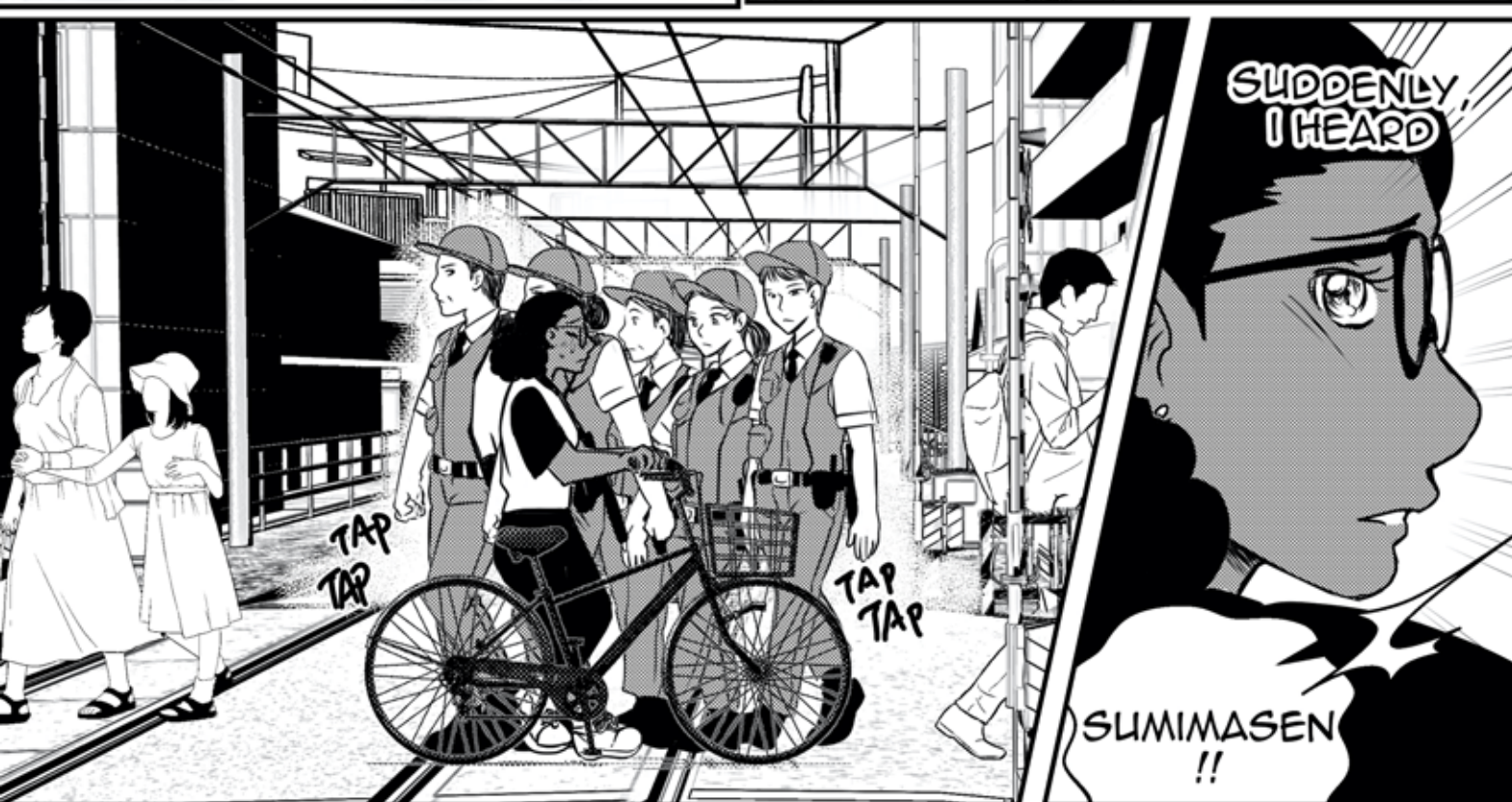
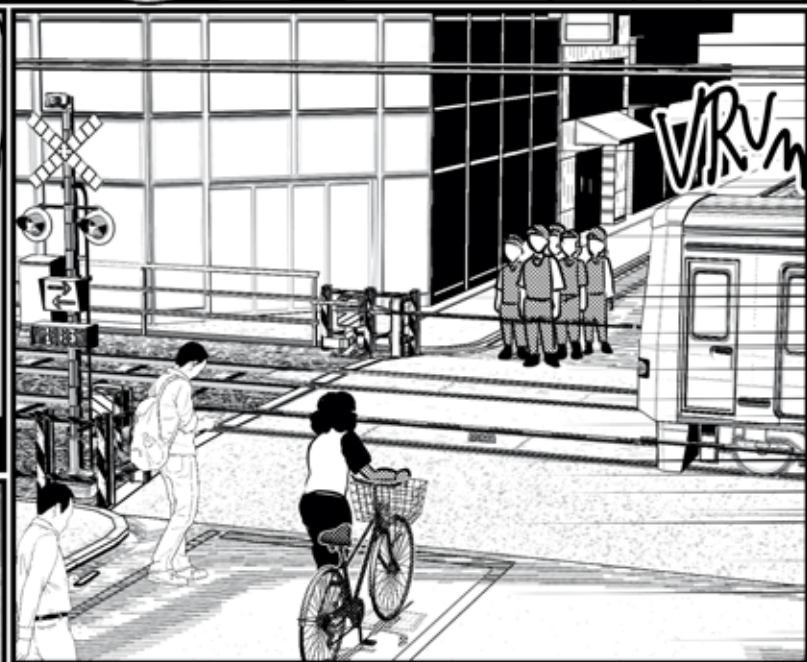
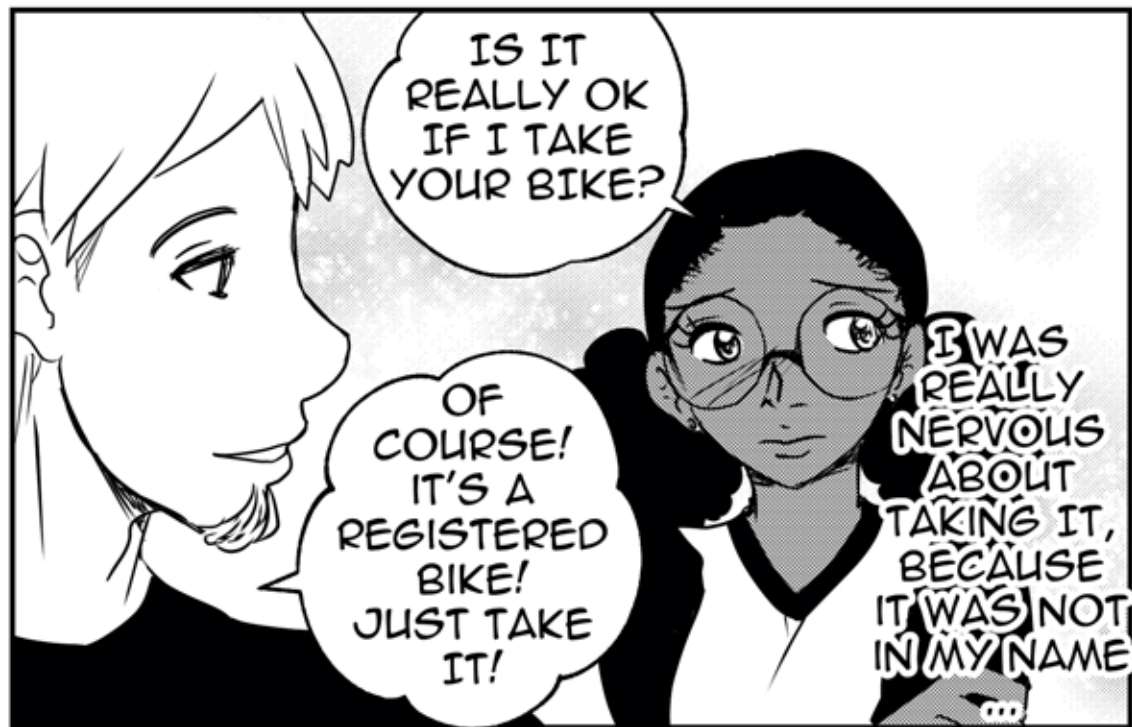


THE ONE THAT
STICKS OUT
TO ME
THE MOST
AND STILL
MAKES ME GET
TEARY-EYED
SOMETIMES...



HAPPENED
DURING
MY FIRST
WEEKEND
AFTER
MOVING TO
SAITAMA WITH
MY PARTNER

TWO DAYS AFTER WE MOVED, MY PARTNER BOUGHT A BIKE AND ON SATURDAY I WANTED TO GO TO THE STORE TO BUY SOME HOUSEHOLD THINGS WE NEEDED





EXCUSE ME, MAY I CHECK YOUR BIKE REGISTRATION ?!

THE YOUNGEST GUY OF THE GROUP WAS SENT BACK TO STOP ME AND I COULD TELL THAT HE DIDN'T REALLY WANT TO DO IT

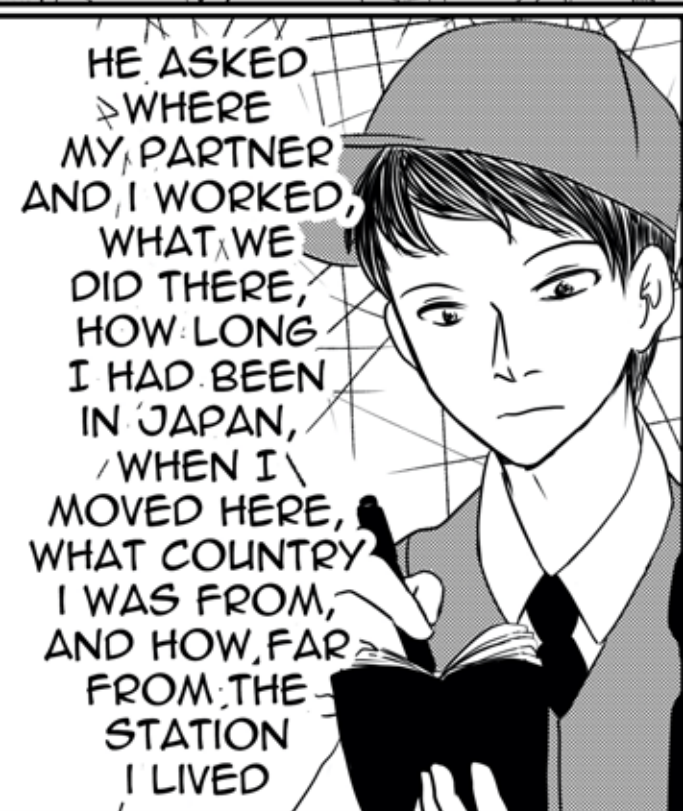


AS SOON AS HE STOPPED ME, PEOPLE STARTED STARING

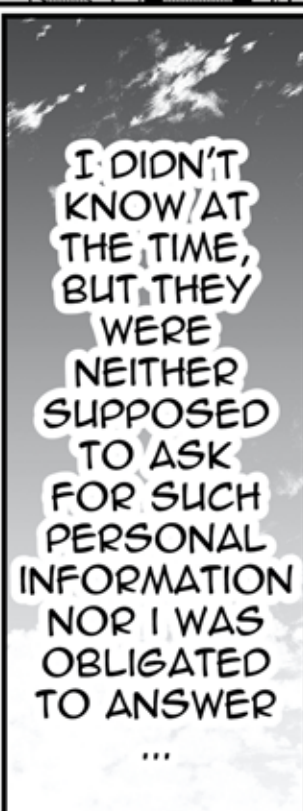


MAY I ALSO SEE YOUR RESIDENCE CARD?

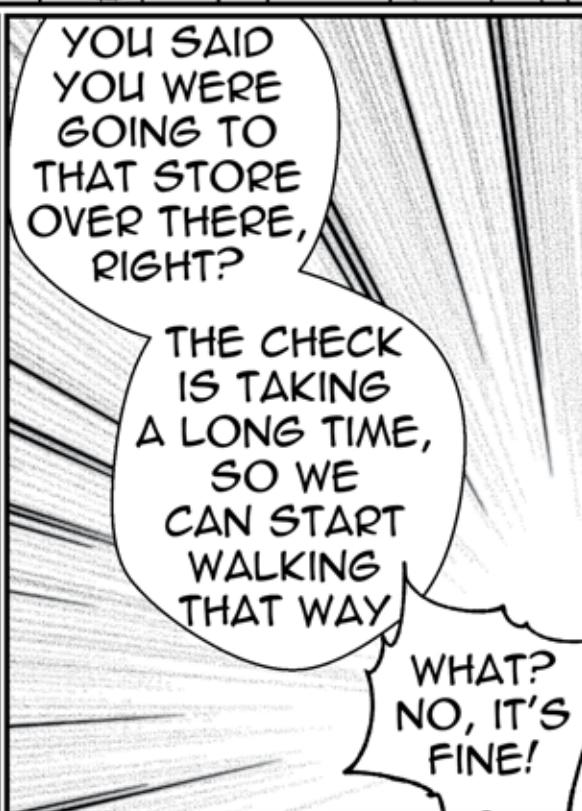
SURE ?



HE ASKED WHERE MY PARTNER AND I WORKED, WHAT WE DID THERE, HOW LONG I HAD BEEN IN JAPAN, WHEN I MOVED HERE, WHAT COUNTRY I WAS FROM, AND HOW FAR FROM THE STATION I LIVED



I DIDN'T KNOW AT THE TIME, BUT THEY WERE NEITHER SUPPOSED TO ASK FOR SUCH PERSONAL INFORMATION NOR I WAS OBLIGATED TO ANSWER ...



YOU SAID YOU WERE GOING TO THAT STORE OVER THERE, RIGHT?

THE CHECK IS TAKING A LONG TIME, SO WE CAN START WALKING THAT WAY

WHAT? NO, IT'S FINE!



PEOPLE WERE WHISPERING AS WE WALKED BY, SO IT ALL FELT MORE EMBARRASSING

HE FINALLY GETS A CALL SAYING THAT THE BIKE REGISTRATION RETURNED EMPTY BECAUSE IT WAS TOO NEW

OK, YOU ARE FREE TO GO NOW

IN FACT, I JUST STOPPED YOU FOR A CHECK BECAUSE THE BIKE WAS BRAND NEW...

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!

I WONDER IF THEY STOP EVERYONE WITH A NEW BIKE FOR A CHECK ...

OH, FINALLY, I WAS GETTING WORRIED! YOU TOOK SO LONG ...



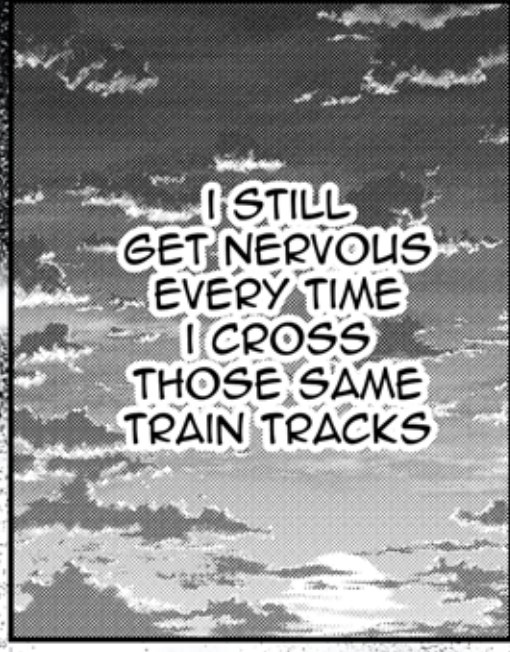
HERE, GIVE ME THE BAGS ...



JAIME, WHAT'S WRONG?



OH NO, YOU WERE STOPPED BY THE POLICE, WEREN'T YOU?



I STILL GET NERVOUS EVERY TIME I CROSS THOSE SAME TRAIN TRACKS



BUT NOT ONLY DID THE TRAIN TRACKS BECOME A PLACE OF TRAUMA



THE TRAIN STATION ITSELF ALSO BECAME ANOTHER SITE WHERE I HAD TO BE AWARE OF THE POLICE



THAT DAY I WAS RUNNING TO GET THE RAPID TRAIN AT NAKANO STATION

TAP

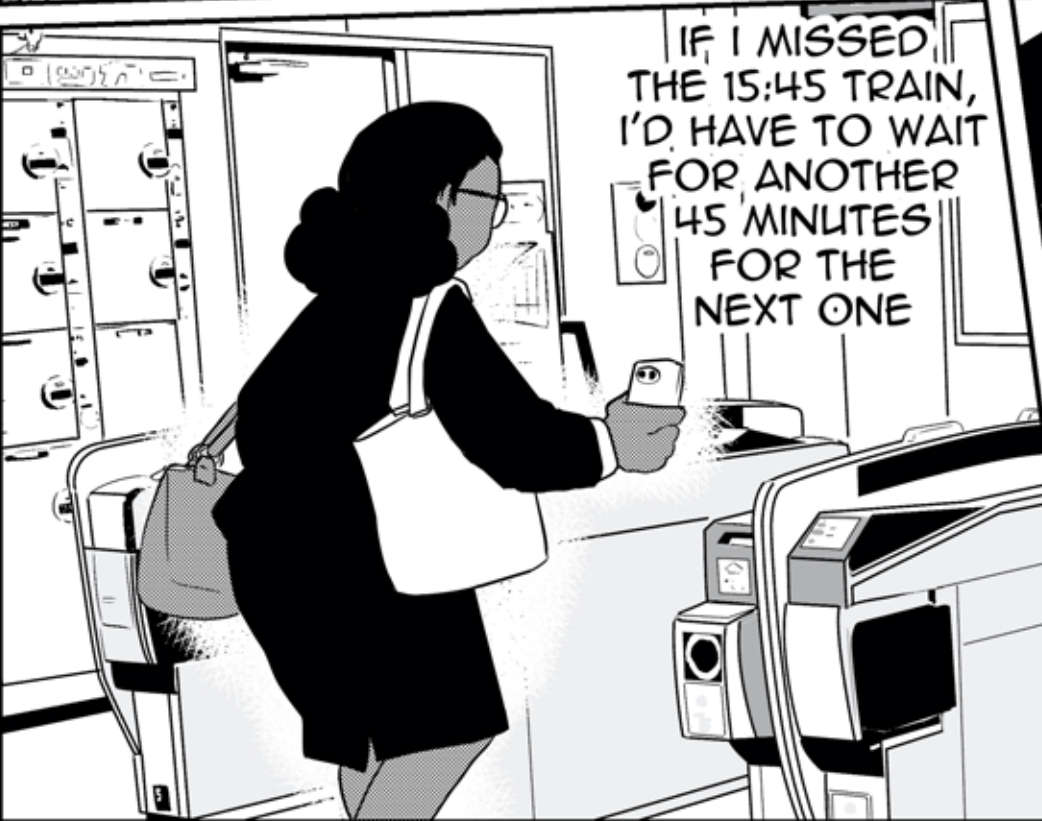
TAP TAP



ALTHOUGH I WAS RUSHING, I WAS FEELING GREAT



I HAD JUST LEFT A JOB INTERVIEW AND I FELT LIKE I HAD NAILED IT



IF I MISSED THE 15:45 TRAIN, I'D HAVE TO WAIT FOR ANOTHER 45 MINUTES FOR THE NEXT ONE



SUMIMASEN !!



I ONLY HAD FOUR MINUTES TO GET TO THE PLATFORM WHEN I HEARD

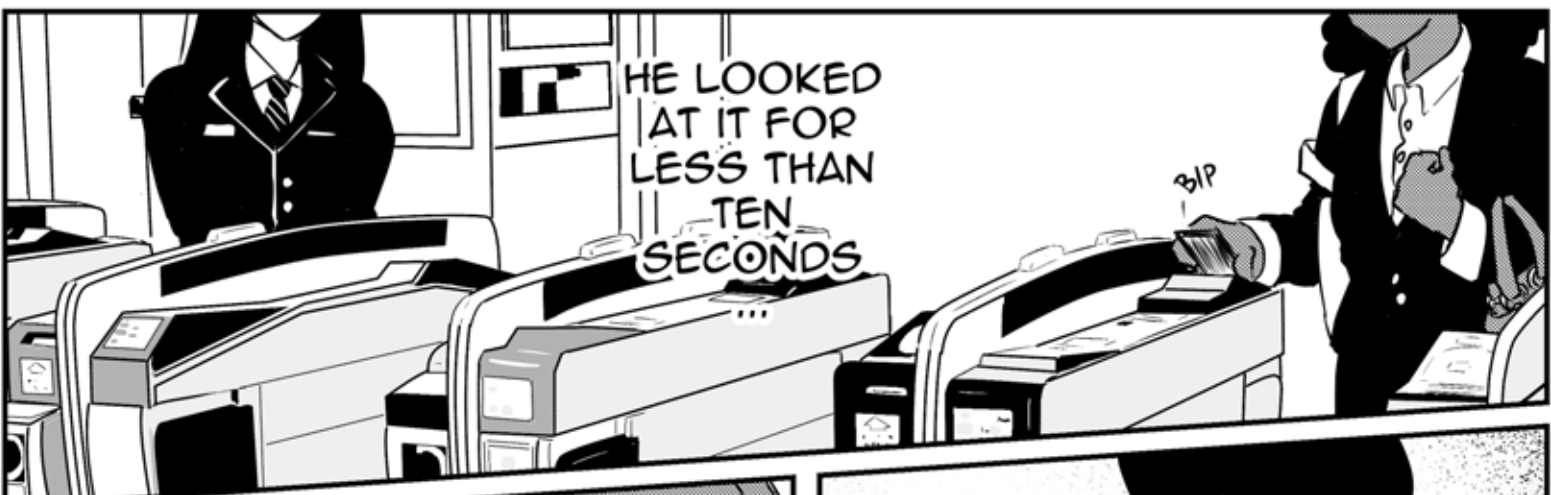




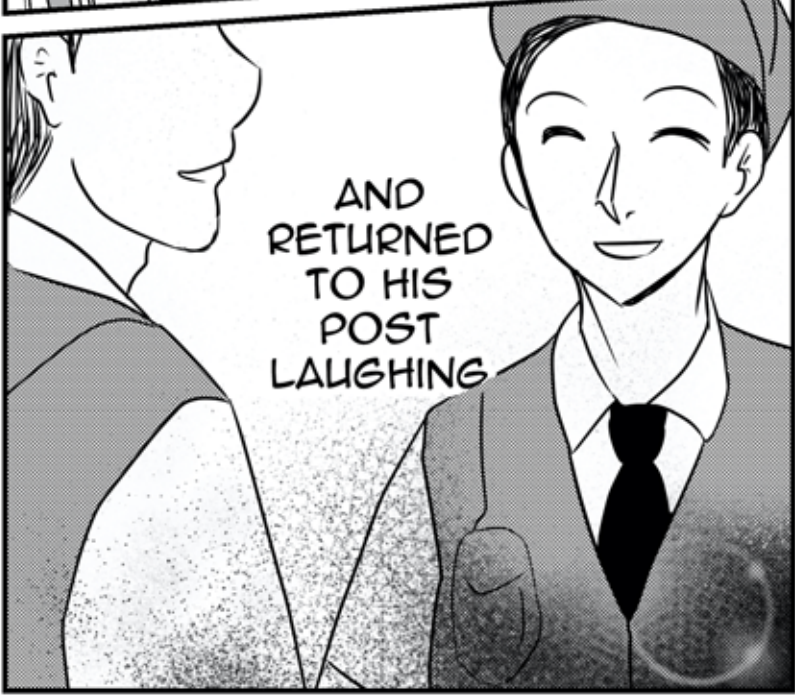
HERE YOU GO...



THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION



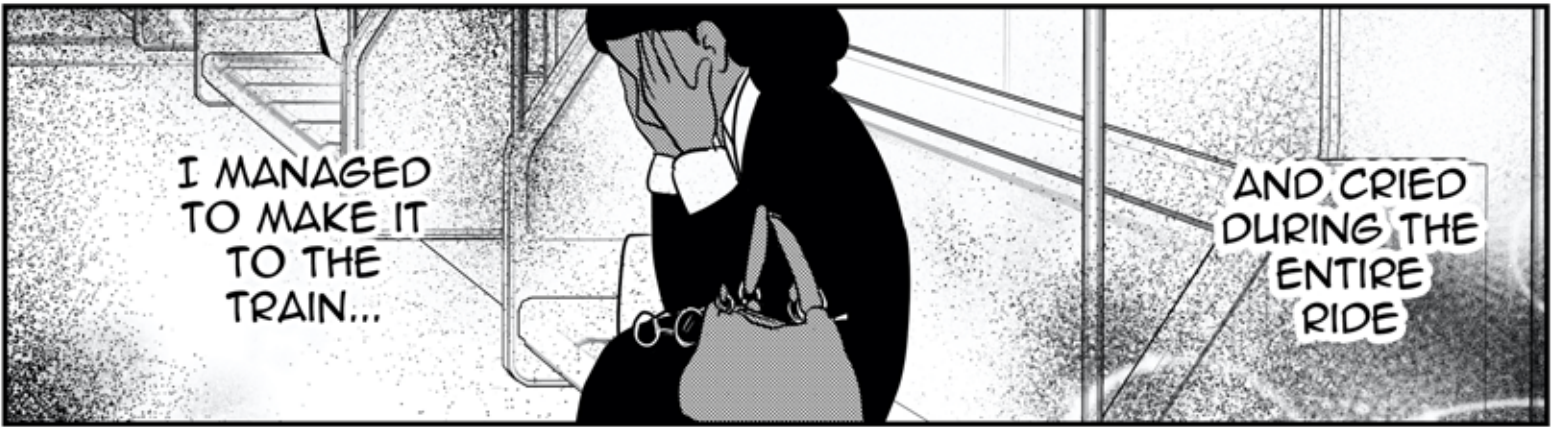
HE LOOKED AT IT FOR LESS THAN TEN SECONDS



AND RETURNED TO HIS POST LAUGHING



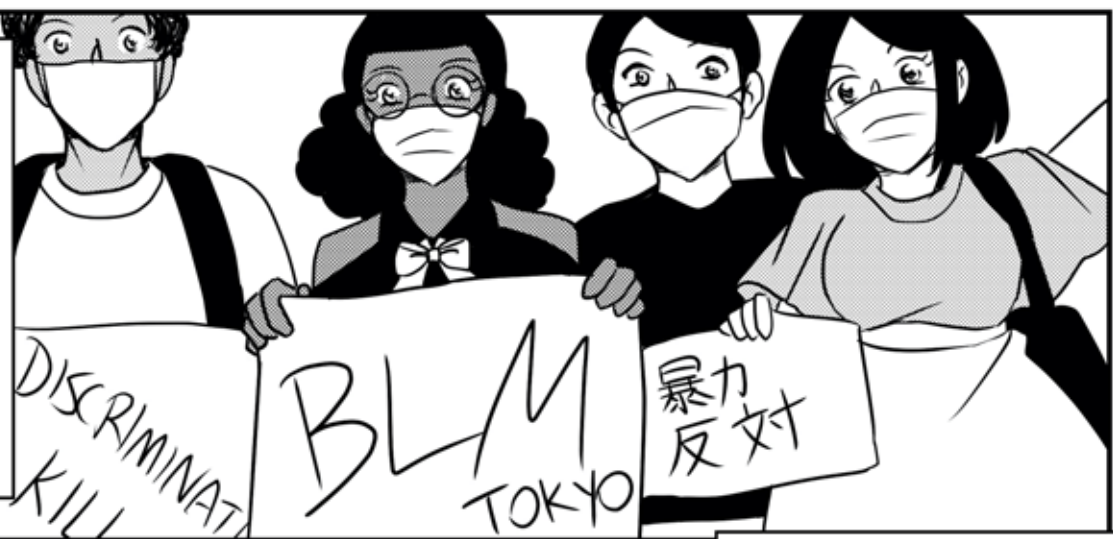
EVEN THE LADY WHO WORKED AT THE GATE HAD THIS SAD FACE SEEING ALL THAT



I MANAGED TO MAKE IT TO THE TRAIN...

AND CRIED DURING THE ENTIRE RIDE

AFTER GETTING INVOLVED IN BLM, JAPANESE AND FOREIGN REPORTERS ALIKE ASKED ME IF I'D EVER HAD ENCOUNTERS WITH POLICE IN THE USA

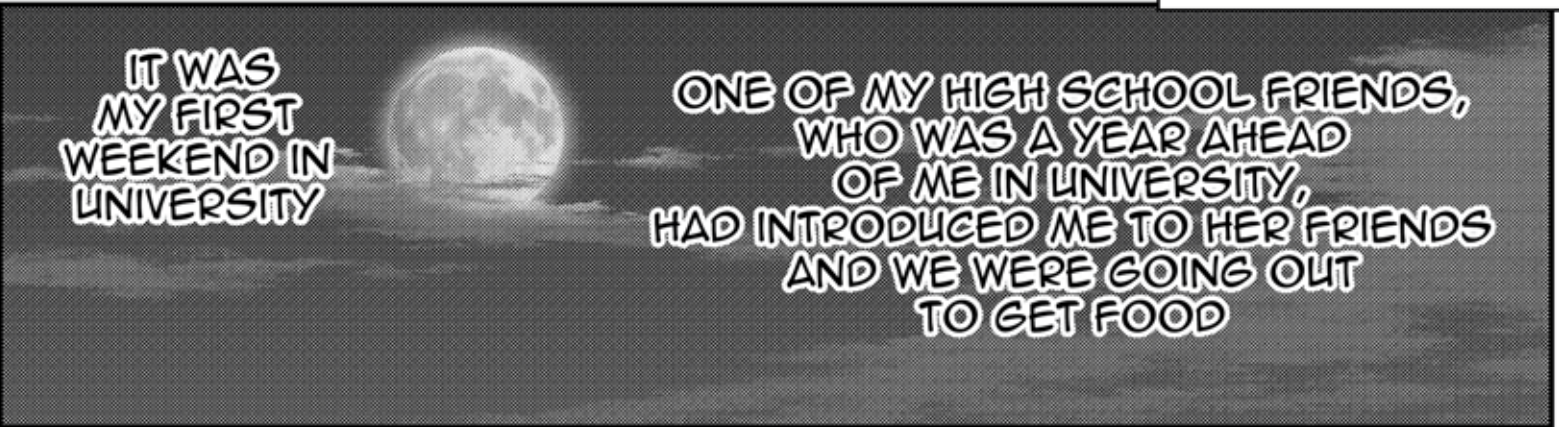


I WOULD TELL THEM NO BECAUSE I BELIEVED I HADN'T BUT EVENTUALLY I REMEMBERED

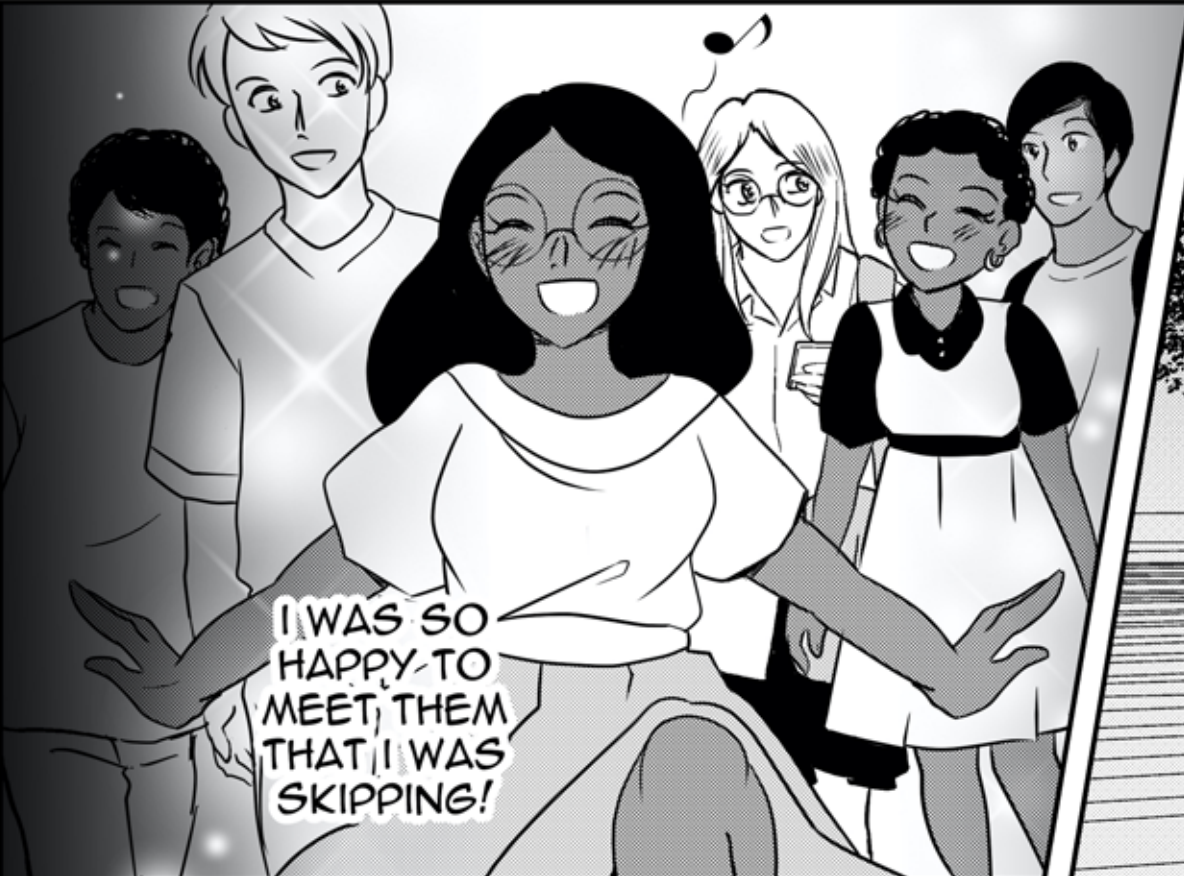


IT WAS MY FIRST WEEKEND IN UNIVERSITY

ONE OF MY HIGH SCHOOL FRIENDS, WHO WAS A YEAR AHEAD OF ME IN UNIVERSITY, HAD INTRODUCED ME TO HER FRIENDS AND WE WERE GOING OUT TO GET FOOD

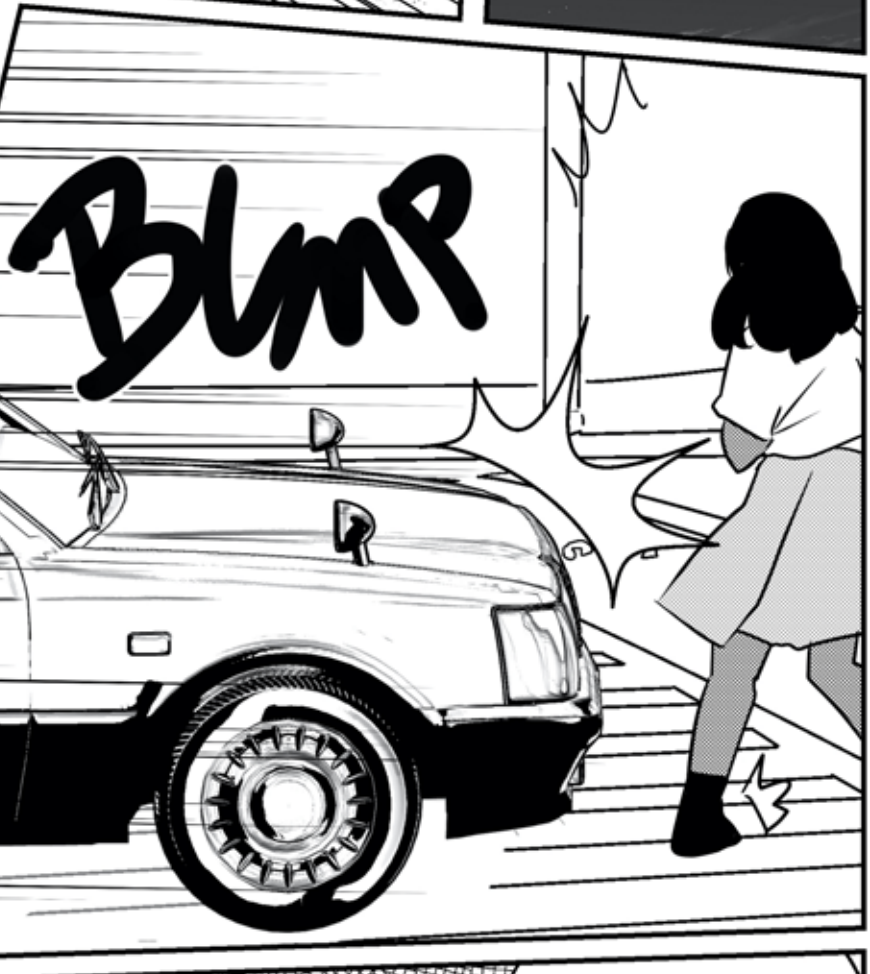
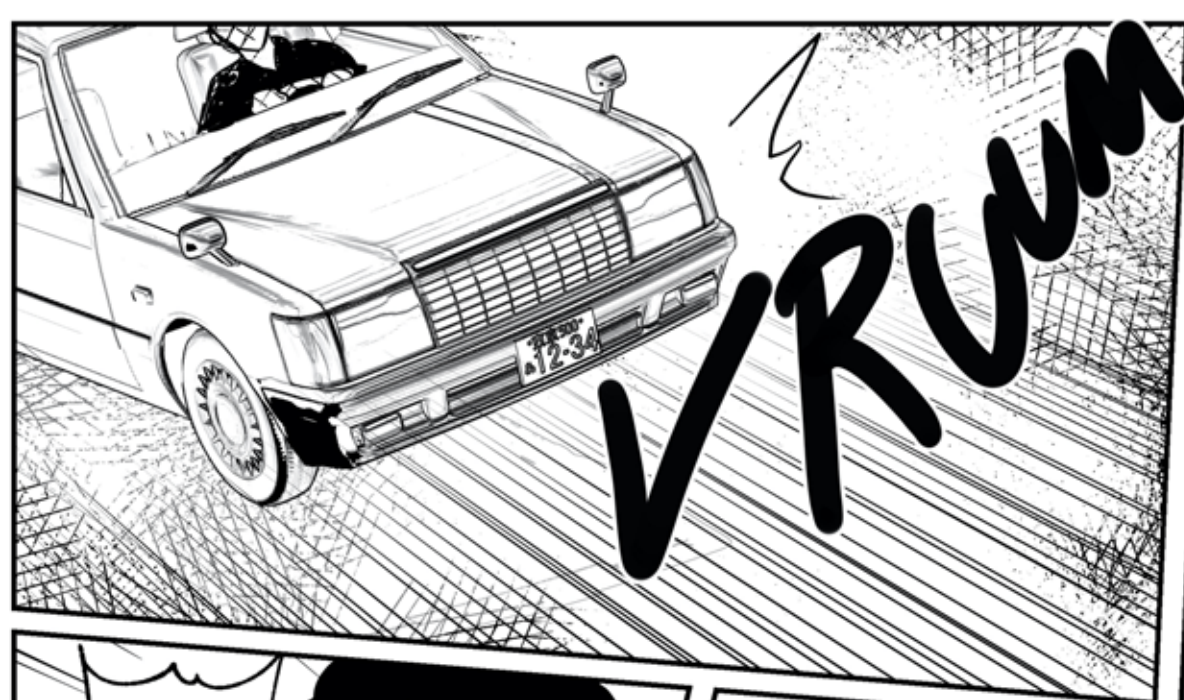


I WAS SO HAPPY TO MEET THEM THAT I WAS SKIPPING!



BUT WHEN I CROSSED THE STREET...





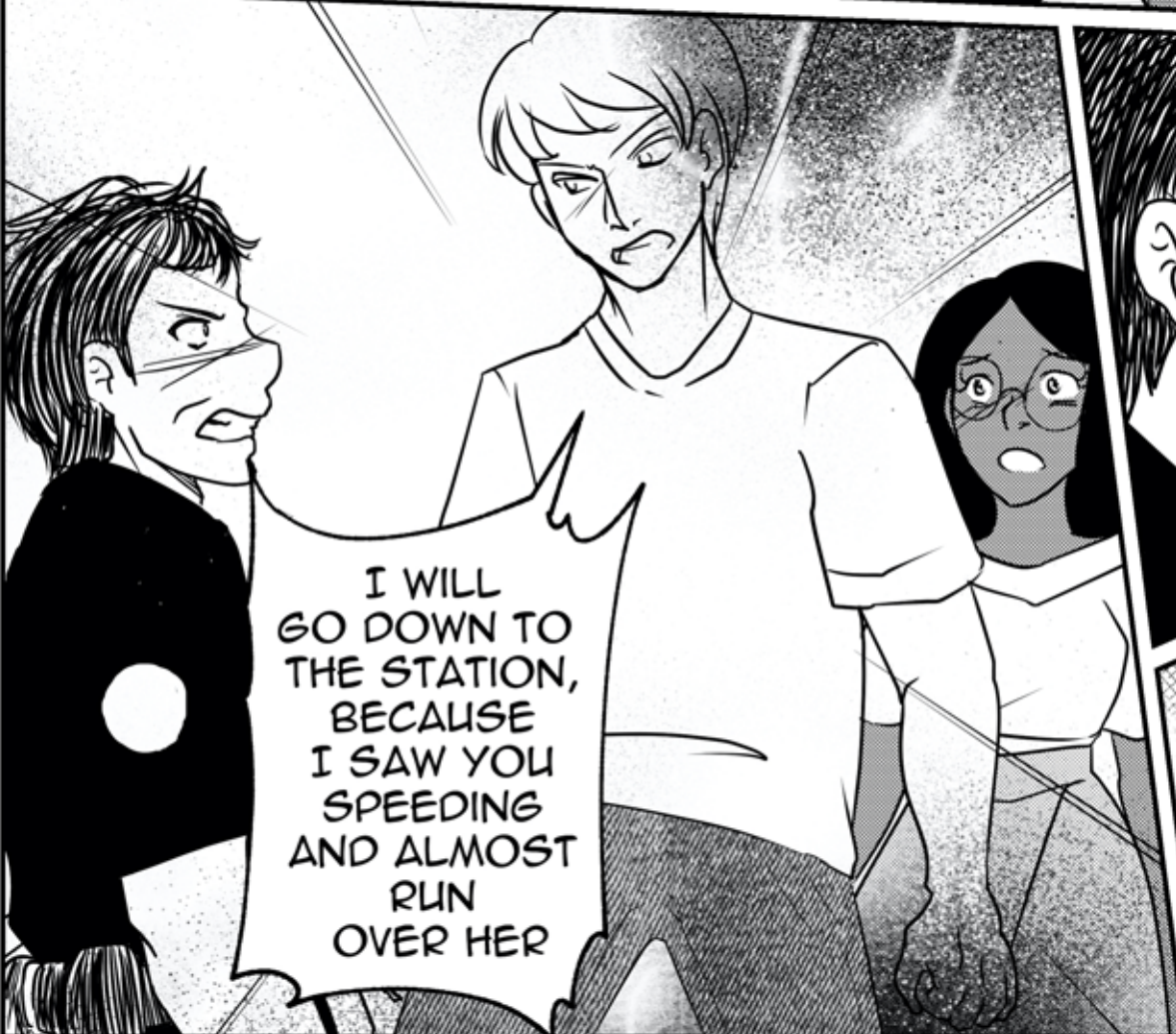


ARE YOU SUGGESTING THAT I'M A LIAR?!

NO, I...

SHOULD I TAKE YOU TO THE STATION, SO YOU CAN MAKE AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT SAYING I'M A LIAR, THEN?

I WILL GO!



I WILL GO DOWN TO THE STATION, BECAUSE I SAW YOU SPEEDING AND ALMOST RUN OVER HER



NEVERMIND ...



I KNEW I COULD HAVE REPORTED HIM FOR HARRASSEMENT BUT I NEVER WANTED TALK ABOUT IT AGAIN, SO EVENTUALLY I REPRESSED THE MEMORY

ALL THESE ACCUMULATIONS OF TRAUMA FROM BEING SEEN AS A "TARGET" HAS REALLY SHAPED THE WAY I NAVIGATE AROUND IN JAPAN

...

AND IN THE USA

THERE SHOULD BE NO HATE AMONG US

I BELIEVE 'BLACK' AND OTHER FOREIGN RESIDENTS, AND JAPANESE PEOPLE ARE ALL A COMMUNITY!

SPEAK UP!
BLM TOKYO

THE BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT IN TOKYO NOT ONLY WANTS TO RAISE AWARENESS AGAINST ANTI-BLACK RACISM IN JAPAN BUT ALSO UNITE BLACK AND JAPANESE PEOPLE

JAIME IS CURRENTLY THE CHAIR OF BLACK LIVES MATTER TOKYO

TOKYO JUSTICE

Uruguay

The experiences of Afro-descendant populations in South America have been well documented in countries like Brazil, Colombia and Venezuela, but much less so in Uruguay. Perhaps that is because Uruguay has long been held up as an example to the rest of Latin America, scoring lowest on inequality and poverty ratings, and having one of the best social inclusion statistics in the region.

But behind these statistics lie the lived experiences of a Black community, for whom racism is a daily fact, and indeed systemic. Comprising approximately 8% of the population, poverty among Black Uruguayans is twice the national rate, and earn 11% less than the rest of the population according to the a 2020 World Bank study, “Social Inclusion in Uruguay”.

And for Afro-descendant Uruguay human rights defenders, fighting racism can be risky – Tania Ramírez, one of the WHRDs from Mizangas, explained that for police in Uruguay, black citizens are “are the reference point for insecurity, detention, false accusations, mistreatment and insults.” In 2012, Tania was physically and verbally assaulted and beaten by a group of women in a racially-motivated attack.

Text: Adriele Oliveira, Mikaela Sánchez, Tania Ramírez and Mizangas

Illustration: Mikaela Sánchez

mizangas.com

“ADDING ESSENCES TO BUILD EQUITY”



Mizangas is a political advocacy movement of Afro-diverse women, who have been at the forefront of the feminist anti-racist struggle by confronting the need to voice our demands and concrete proposals.

Mizangas derives from *masanga*, a word of Yoruba origin meaning small beads of a necklace of protection. In some African cultures, mizangas play a very important role, its use and meaning is associated with identity, culture, beauty, power.

For us Mizangas means union, collective strength, identity, struggle, resistance, ancestry, sisterhood and revolution. In our necklace, each mizanga is fundamental to make up the whole.

Since 2006 we have strengthened and positioned the political subject of Afro women in an intersectional way, in the country and in the region, promoting a discourse and actions from black feminism, and becoming a reference in the strengthening and personal and collective growth of Afro women and other social movements.

POLITICAL ADVOCACY TO INFLUENCE OUR LIVES



We develop lines of action in different areas to achieve our objectives: research, training, debates, publications, workshops, mobilisations and advocacy.

We have articulated and contributed conceptually and politically to the approval of Law 19.122/13 on affirmative action for the Afro population in education and employment. This law "recognises that the Afro-descendant population that inhabits the national territory has historically been a victim of racism, discrimination and stigmatisation since the time of the slave trade and trafficking, actions that are considered crimes against humanity under international law".

DENOUNCING HETEROPATRIARCHAL RACISM



In 2012, after the racist aggression suffered by a founding member of Mizangas, the collective called for a mobilisation, with the support of various organisations and collectives from across the social movement, state institutions and political parties.

The March of the Motas was the country's biggest mobilization against racism to denounce this and other cases of racism, racial discrimination and hate crimes against Afro-descendants, which continue in total impunity, demonstrating the institutional racism that underpins the justice system.

Unfortunately, despite being a case that had media and public repercussions at national and international levels, and even with all the sufficient evidence, justice has not yet been done.

"Breaking the silence in cases such as this one is fundamental to highlight the existence and persistence of a racist system [...], which is violent in every way, which crystallises socially, culturally, structurally and with which Afro-descendants coexist daily throughout our lives". (Ramírez, 2012).

NO RACISM, BETTER DEMOCRACY

In March 2019, we received Angela Davis for the first time in Uruguay, in the framework of two commemorations of global relevance: 8th March, International Women's Day, and 21st March, International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

It was an initiative of Horizonte de Libertades, a project that is the synthesis of an articulated, twinned and intersectional work, carried out collectively by Mizangas Mujeres Afrodescendientes, Colectivo Ovejas Negras, Mujeres en el Horno and +Vhidas and in articulation with the State and the support of other social movements.



"The ongoing struggle for freedom lies at the heart of democracy. Those who fight to defend democracy are those who do not accept that it is conditioned by capitalism, heteropatriarchy and racism" (Davis, 2019).

Her visit mobilised Afro-descendant activists, feminists, LGBTI, indigenous people, the student movement, the workers' movement, academics and the political system, with the presence of delegations from Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Peru, Venezuela and the whole of Uruguay, demonstrating the commitment to the anti-racist struggle.

Her presence has honoured us as a country and a region, signifying an act of reparation for those of us who have been putting our bodies in resistance to combat the inequalities that are being perpetuated by this racist, classist, homo-lesbo-bi-trans-phobic and capitalist system that destructively excludes.

Angela Davis, in her visit to Uruguay, left a message of hope and strengthened the struggles of oppressed peoples.

MIZANGAS, AFRO WOMEN'S MOVEMENT.

Every day in our lives, as women of African descent, trans, lesbian, bisexual, migrant, young women, mothers, professionals, workers, students, we face situations of racism, endo-racism, machismo, lesbo- bi- trans-phobia, discrimination and exclusion, which expose us to all kinds of explicit and symbolic violence, and which we denounce and fight to eradicate emphatically through our actions.

We are clear that demonstrations and street protests are internationally recognised human rights for all people, which democratic governments have the obligation to respect and protect. Despite this, we are currently witnessing in Latin America an increase in the repressive apparatus of the state and threats from sectors that promote hatred towards women, Afro-descendants, LGBT people and other sectors of the population considered "minorities".

We are convinced of building more just and egalitarian societies and we do it for us, for those of us who are here, for those who are coming and for the ancestral legacy of those who are no longer here and who started these struggles.



Sudan

Sudan may not be the first country one thinks of when considering the devastating effects of racism and race-based political violence, yet arguably the country would rank near the top of the list of number of victims of systemic racism.

Sudanese were trafficked in the slave trade into Arab countries as early as the seventh century, and although centuries of intermarriage subsequently made easy distinction more complicated, racial differences are both seen and understood by Sudanese, even if difficult to discern by foreigners, particularly Western eyes used to seeing race in terms of white/black.

When protests against the regime of Omar Al-Bashir emerged in 2019, a new consciousness also circulated among the protesters, as people came from all communities of the country to push to topple the government. Slogans and chants circulated that indicated the old divisions, which helped rulers divide and fueled conflict in the country, might not survive a new Sudan.

The transitional period the country is now in is charting a course of a reimagining of the country, in terms of governance, rule of law, power and justice. But it is also a moment of questioning of identity and how race and ethnicity factors into who has power and who does not. The struggle in Sudan today is not just over who rules, but also how – and at the crux of this struggle is how black lives matter in a post-revolutionary Sudan.

Text: Khalid Al-Baih

[Instagram](#)

Artist: Joseph Bergen

Joseph Bergen is a Native American artist and engineer based in Brooklyn, NY.

josephbergen.com



More than a year after the Sudanese revolution toppled al-Bashir, racism is still rampant in the country.

On August 2, as General Shams al-Din al-Kabashi emerged from a house in Omdurman, protesters ambushed him with anti-military chants. Al-Kabashi, who is a member of the ruling sovereign council dominated by the military, had supposedly just had an hours-long meeting with supporters of deposed President Omar al-Bashir.

While the protesters' anger was understandable, given that the military leadership continues to resist dismantling al-Bashir's regime, some of them went beyond political chants and started shouting racial slurs at the general, who is darker-skinned and hails from the Nuba Mountains region, an area in the southern part of Sudan where most communities are of African descent.

This racist episode came just a few weeks after Sudanese social media users mounted a campaign of racist abuse against a famous footballer from west Sudan, Issam Abdulraheem, after he posted a photo of himself and his wife, Reem Khougli, a makeup artist who happens to be a light-skinned Arab.

Seeing this a bit more than a year after Sudan had its first Black Lives Matter moment is quite disheartening. As the Sudanese people battled al-Bashir's tyranny last year, many came to the realisation that defeating his regime would mean not only toppling him and wresting political power out of the hands of the military but also dismantling the vast system of racial and socioeconomic oppression that has dominated every aspect of Sudanese life since before his rule.

The Sudanese revolution embraced national unity and vowed to build a "new Sudan" on the foundations of socioeconomic and racial justice and equality. But these recent racist incidents show just how far away we are from achieving it.

Race and racism in Sudan

Sudan is an ethnically diverse country. While the majority is made up of Muslim Arab-speaking tribes of various backgrounds, there are many non-Arabised ethnic groups, including, Nubians, Beja, Fur, Nuba (ethnically different from Nubians), Fallata and others. These communities have been historically marginalised, discriminated against and politically ostracised.



Part of the reason for this has to do with British colonialism, which favoured some tribes over others, but much of it also is related to Sudan's pre-colonial history. In the seventh century, the Christian Nubian state of Makuria concluded a treaty (known as al-Baqt) with Egypt's Arab conquerors, which among other provisions included the transfer of 360 slaves per year to new Egyptian rulers. This established Sudan as a source of slaves for Egypt and the rest of the Arab world.

Over the following centuries, Arab tribes gradually migrated into Sudanese lands and intermarried with the local Black African population, thus gradually Arabising it. Some of these tribes engaged in the slave trade. The gradual Arabisation dislocated culturally parts of Sudan from Africa, solidifying the belief of Arab superiority and native non-Arabised inferiority and laying the foundations of modern Sudan's identity crisis. Those who were enslaved were almost exclusively members of the non-Muslim non-Arabised tribes.



After independence, the Sudanese society continued to be plagued by this historical legacy. Growing up in the 1980s in Sudan, I was aware of these racial divisions. I myself come from an Arabic-speaking tribe and am considered an Arab in Sudan.

I went to a private school in Khartoum, run by missionaries, where the majority of students there were children of displaced families from the south, mostly Christians. A foreigner would probably have thought all of us looked the same, but to a Sudanese, there was a huge difference – I was an Arab and one or two shades lighter than my classmates, which gave me immense privilege.

Although I did not know why exactly I was “superior” to my darker non-Arab classmates, I knew for sure I was because everyone important I saw on television looked like me. Indeed, political and economic power was almost exclusively in the hands of members of the Arabised tribes.

This oppression and marginalisation had led to the first Sudanese civil war (1955-72) and then in the 1980s to another one. When al-Bashir came to power through a military coup in 1989 backed by Islamist forces, this situation deteriorated further. Discrimination and violence against non-Muslims and non-Arabs got worse, as his regime sought to frame the conflict in religious terms.

Around that time, my family had to leave for Qatar as part of the huge exodus of Sudanese professionals who got sacked for not being part of the National Islamic Front.

This is when my world turned upside down. My parents put me in a public school in Doha, where I was surrounded by Arabs from the Gulf, Levant, and North Africa. The kids knew I was an “Arab” but made fun of my accent, hair and skin colour. I had not only lost my privilege but for the first time in my life faced racism and discrimination. I was only 11 years old.

This shift, as well as the realisation that I had been part of the normalisation of anti-Blackness, affected me deeply as a teenager. I would regularly fight with classmates who called me abid (slave) only to go back to my community and hear north Sudanese people like me use the same word for anyone from the non-Arabised tribes. Indeed, the Sudanese people are a prime example of Black people being both the victim and the perpetrator of racism.

The 1990s for me were marked by news of the Sudanese war, where rebel groups of the predominantly Christian south fought al-Bashir’s army, the normalisation of anti-Black “jokes” by my Arab classmates, and my introduction to American culture, with sitcoms like Friends and Seinfeld, where no one looked like me, and conscious hip-hop, where everyone looked like me.

In the 2000s, the war in the south gave way to the Darfur conflict, where again Khartoum fought Darfuri tribes of African descent by arming what is commonly known as Darfuri Arabs, a mixture of Arabic-speaking local and migrant tribes. That was the time when I struggled with denial about the racism in my own community.





Years later, while travelling as a Black artist to exhibitions where my art was showcased, I saw first-hand how white supremacy had empowered more sophisticated forms of racism and anti-Blackness around the world. While in the West, I saw white people oppressing people of colour, in Africa, it was Black people oppressing people who looked just a shade darker than them, spoke a different tongue, or came from a different social class.

These life experiences have shaped me as an artist and guided the politics of my art – be it cartoons, installations or film.



Sudan's Black Lives Matter moment

Although many of us in the diaspora walked this path of self-reflection on privilege and racism in Sudan, many of our compatriots remaining in the country did not. This was at least until last year when the Sudanese revolution erupted and the regime deployed in the north the same violent tactics it had used in the south and Darfur.

Protesters in Khartoum, Omdurman, and elsewhere faced beatings, shootings, rape and torture. Those who perpetrated these brutal acts were the same fighters who had been deployed in Darfur to wreak havoc on impoverished and marginalised communities. The protests brought together citizens from all over the country and cross-communal solidarity started to emerge, as people shared their stories of violence and pain.

And then one day in February, during a protest in Khartoum, the crowd broke into a new chant: “Ya unsuri w maghrur, kol albalad Darfur [hey you racist and arrogant, all the country is Darfur].” This was probably the first time that so many people in the north faced off with the military regime and showed solidarity with Darfur. This was our Black Lives Matter moment of Sudan.

Thus the country united. The dictator fell. And a new beginning was promised to people of all ethnicities and colours.



But more than a year later, not only are racial slurs still regularly used for non-Arab Sudanese people, but little has changed for Darfurians and other marginalised communities as well.



In July, violence erupted in the region once again, killing at least 60 people. According to the United Nations, some 2,500 people had to flee to Chad as the situation remains unstable. The Sudanese media, which now supposedly enjoys more freedom than under al-Bashir, ignored the news, demonstrating just how little Darfurian lives matter in Khartoum.

A month earlier, when mass protests erupted following the death of George Floyd, a Black man, at the hands of police officers in the United States, there was no official reaction. That, of course, should not come as a surprise given that the Sudanese elite continues to deny its Africanness and behaves like a settler-colonial authority.

But common people, who last year were in the streets fighting for a better future for their country, also seemed uninterested.

“We are all Black people here [ie there is no anti-Black racism]”, “we have bigger problems than Black people in America”, “people die every day in Yemen or Syria, how come we don’t hear about them” – these were some of the comments I heard when I or other activists spoke up about Black Lives Matter in Sudan.



Building a new Sudan – the one we imagined last year when al-Bashir fell – will take a long time and a lot of hard work. The transitional government made some positive steps by choosing some professionals from marginalised communities for important posts, such as Justice Minister Nasreldin Abdelbari, who is of Fur background.

But we will make no progress until we realise that the anti-racism struggle at home and worldwide has to be an integral part of that process. We need to stand with our brothers and sisters in Darfur, in the rest of Africa and the rest of the world.

We have to stand for Black Lives Matter, we have to embrace our Blackness, in a land literally called the land of the Black people and accept that some of us are both African and Arab.



Individually, we have to be the change we want, we have to lay the foundations of a Sudan for all, where future generations can live in peace and harmony.



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