

News

Protest Signs by Artists and Celebrities Sold to Benefit Families of Black Women Killed by Police

Over 140 artists and celebrities contributed to *Show Me the Signs*, a live auction and exhibition at Blum & Poe in Los Angeles that benefits the #SayHerName Mothers Network.



Cassie Packard November 12, 2020



Krystle Lemonias, "Fed Up and Vex" (2020)

More than 140 artists and celebrities, including Bruno Mars, David Hockney, and Marilyn Minter, have contributed protest signs to *Show Me the Signs*, a live auction and exhibition held to benefit the families of Black women killed by the police. All proceeds from the sale will go to the African American Policy Forum's (AAPF) #SayHerName Mothers Network, which advocates for social justice reform and provides direct support to mothers and other family members of Black women, girls, and femmes who have been victims of police brutality. The two-part auction will take place on the new online art marketplace Artfizz from November 10–19 and November 21–30, accompanied by an in-person exhibition of the signs at Blum & Poe in Los Angeles until November 14.

Show Me the Signs is part of a larger effort to ensure that the movement for Black lives is gender-inclusive. Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw, the director and co-founder of AAPF and the founder of the Say Her Name movement, said in a statement:

Black women and girls do not fit the most accessible frames of anti-Black police violence, and because of that, it's difficult to tell their stories in a way that people recognize and remember. By working with the families of slain Black women, AAPF's #SayHerName campaign resists Black women's invisibility by telling their stories.

Participants had diverse responses to the project prompt. Some, including musical artists Billie Eilish and Cardi B, opted to make signs comparable to those seen at Black Lives Matter protests across the country, cardboard creations with familiar slogans like “Black Lives Matter,” “No Justice, No Peace,” “Hands Up Don’t Shoot,” and “Say Her Name.” The use of expletives to express the depths of the makers’ frustration, anger, and grief was not uncommon: artist Kara Joslyn’s poster declares “Fuck ICE!”, while artist and critic Kenny Schachter’s reads “Stop Killing People You Cunts.”

Several participating artists chose to replicate other kinds of signs. Conceptual artist Piero Golia fabricated an aluminum street sign printed with the words “You Can Look Away But You Can’t Pretend Not To Know”; Patrick Martinez, who is known for his neon works, made a suite of corrugated plastic lawn signs. Submissions also took the form of photographs, paintings, and sculptural pieces, such as a stretched elk-skin shield by Umar Rashid and a geometric plywood construction forming the letters “BLM” made by Julian Hoeber. The works on offer range in price from \$1, for a sign by the Haas Brothers that encourages the viewer to “Make your own sign and get out there,” to \$20,000 for a placard by Rashid Johnson that reads “Stop Killing Black People” in red oil paint and for Nancy Rubins’ pencil-on-board “Drawing for Breonna.”

Numerous pieces in *Show Me the Signs* name **Breonna Taylor**, the 26-year-old Black EMT murdered in her sleep by plainclothes police officers in Louisville, Kentucky, in March. In addition to Breonna Taylor, other women named in the signs include **Pamela Turner**, who was shot by a police officer in a parking lot in Texas; **Sandra Bland**, who was found dead in police custody; and **Kayla Moore**, who was killed in her apartment by Berkeley police officers. Several participating artists, including Zoe Walsh and Pearl C. Hsiung, specifically reference the movement for the lives of Black Trans women, who, in addition to being frequent victims of fatal racist and transphobic violence, are often misgendered in police reports.