

“What does *Black Lives Matter* mean to you?”

An activity guide to accompany Raffi’s song,
“Black Lives Matter To Me”

Dr. Rekha S. Rajan
January, 2021

Contents

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE	3
Early Childhood (ages 3-5).....	4
ACTIVITIES.....	5
Middle Grade (ages 6-9)	8
ACTIVITIES.....	9
Tweens (ages 10-12)	12
ACTIVITIES.....	13
Adolescents (ages 13-18).....	16
ACTIVITIES.....	17

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

OUR MISSION:

As teachers and parents, in our current times of COVID, at-home learning, and social distancing, how do we support our children? How do we provide them with outlets for expressing their social and emotional needs?

How do we empower them to lead, make change, and know that their voice counts?

World-renowned children's musician and songwriter, Raffi Cavoukian, has used music as a way to address the most challenging issues that we face within our communities, making these topics accessible for young audiences to adults who grew up cherishing his songs.

Since his first performances and recordings, our times have continued to be turbulent, with new issues and conflicts unraveling every day.

The message of the activities and ideas will reinforce how "Art is Activism" and that through music, songwriting, dance, and art, children can share their views, perspectives and interpretations of important events – using Raffi's music as a platform for dialogue.

DIRECTIONAL NOTE:

Although the activities address the parent and family experience with language such as "your child" or "your family" these activities can be easily adapted to a classroom setting. If you are an educator utilizing these activities, please modify the language in your discussions with "your students" and adapt a one-on-one setting to a small group in the classroom.

The activities are also templates and guidelines and not intended to be restrictive or structured. We want the most organic and natural forms of expression to share how you, your children, family and classrooms have been inspired by the song and the lyrics.

MATERIALS NOTE:

Many of these activities encourage using art and song to express your feelings regarding the Black Lives Matters movement and in sharing your experience with listening to the "Black Lives Matters To Me" song. We encourage using any available materials that are in your home or environment! You do not need to purchase any materials, instead we want to follow the foundation of Child Honouring and the principles that children should share their experiences in the most natural and organic way. This could include using materials found outside as well and utilizing nature as a way to connect with our feelings.

Early Childhood (ages 3-5)

Before Listening:

Invite your child (or children) to listen to the song in a comfortable space. This could be in the family room, bedroom, outside, or playroom.

During Listening:

Encourage your child to be comfortable either through standing and moving to the song or to close their eyes as the song plays.

After Listening:

Talk with your child about the lyrics in the song by inviting them to respond to open-ended questions such as “What does Black Lives Matter mean?”

Expand the discussion by sharing how BLM is an important movement in our world, where people in the black community want to be treated equally and fairly. Think about a time when you helped someone who was sad, feel happy. What did you do to help someone feel good inside?

Note: An additional example could be asking your child about a moment at the playground or in a playgroup where you child didn't get a turn (on the swing, slide, with an instrument) – What did you do? How did you feel? What are the choices you (or we) made?

(This language is important as it begins to encourage our youngest listeners to be change agents).

Pause for time for reflection. Ask - “when is a time you felt like something was unfair?” “How would you feel if someone hurt you because of how you looked?”

Allow time for children to share their experiences – these may be personal, familial or school-based. Support each response with an affirmation that their feelings were important.

Follow-up by talking about how important it is to show love and care. Ask your child, “who or what brings you love, and why?”

ACTIVITIES

These activities connect to the Child Honouring philosophy by teaching children that it is important to treat people with respect, no matter their skin color, and inviting them to respond to unfair treatment. Children are also reflecting on the importance of love, who and what they love (family, friends, pets, earth), and understanding why we need love to thrive and grow.

Our Family & Friends Activity Sheet

1. Begin a discussion with the students about family, what family means, and who are some members of their family. Encourage your child to draw, paint, model, sketch, sing, act, dance in response to the outline of *Our Family and Friends*.

Ask, “how would feel if someone was mean to you or us, just because of our skin color?” Using the activity sheet as a template, record or document how your child responded to the activity.

2. Each member of your family can draw and respond to the question. Create a family collage of your art.

3. Share the image on the website and through social media. Make sure to tag the foundation and Raffi!

Love Activity Sheet

1. After listening to the song and pause after the lyrics play which state that “black babies need love” and “black children need love.” Ask your child (or repeat from earlier) “what or who do you love, and why?”

2. Record your child’s response in the Love activity sheet and encourage your child to draw an image depicting who or what they love.

3. Explain that we all need love, care and support to feel safe. Share the image on the website and through social media. Make sure to tag the foundation and Raffi!

OUR FAMILY & FRIENDS

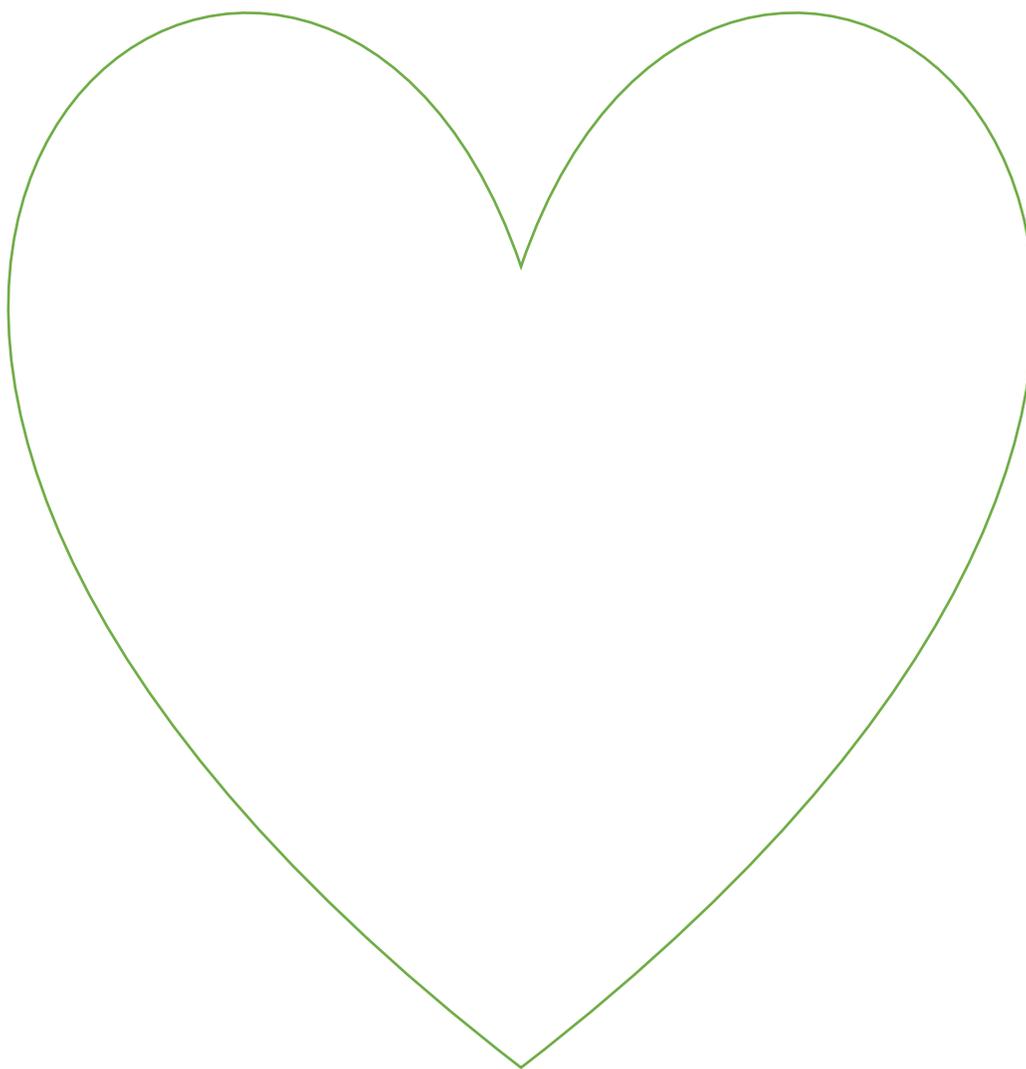


If someone hurt me or someone in my family, I would feel _____

because _____

Name: _____ Age: _____

LOVE



I love _____

because _____

Name: _____ Age: _____

Middle Grade (ages 6-9)

These activities connect to the Child Honouring philosophy by teaching children that skin color should not make anyone uncomfortable, afraid, or even the opposite – powerful to hurt people.

Instead, through the song, children should recognize how we should celebrate all colors and explore what colors are important and representative of their feelings during certain events or moments in their life.

Before Listening:

Invite your child (or children) to listen to the song in a comfortable space. This could be in the family room, bedroom, outside, or playroom.

During Listening:

Sit facing your child (or children), creating a circle or “safe space” for listening to and reflecting on the song. Encourage your child to tap along to the song by gently tapping their hands on their knees and keeping the beat, or slowly moving their arms/legs as *they feel like* the music makes them move.

After Listening:

Talk with your children about the lyrics in the song by inviting them to respond to the question “What does Black Lives Matter mean *to you*?”

Expand the discussion by sharing how BLM is an important movement in our world, where people in the black community want to be treated equally and fairly - where we need to take *actions* to create *change*. (This language is important as it begins to encourage our youngest listeners to be change agents).

Pause for time for reflection. Ask - “How would you feel if someone hurt you because of your skin color?”

Allow time for children to share their experiences – these may be personal, familial or school-based. Support each response with an affirmation that their feelings were important. Follow-up by asking, “Is it *fair* to treat someone differently or hurt them because of their skin color?”

Continue the conversation by asking how they would *feel* if they (or a family member or friend) were treated badly, hurt, or punished just because of their skin color – “How would you feel?”

ACTIVITIES

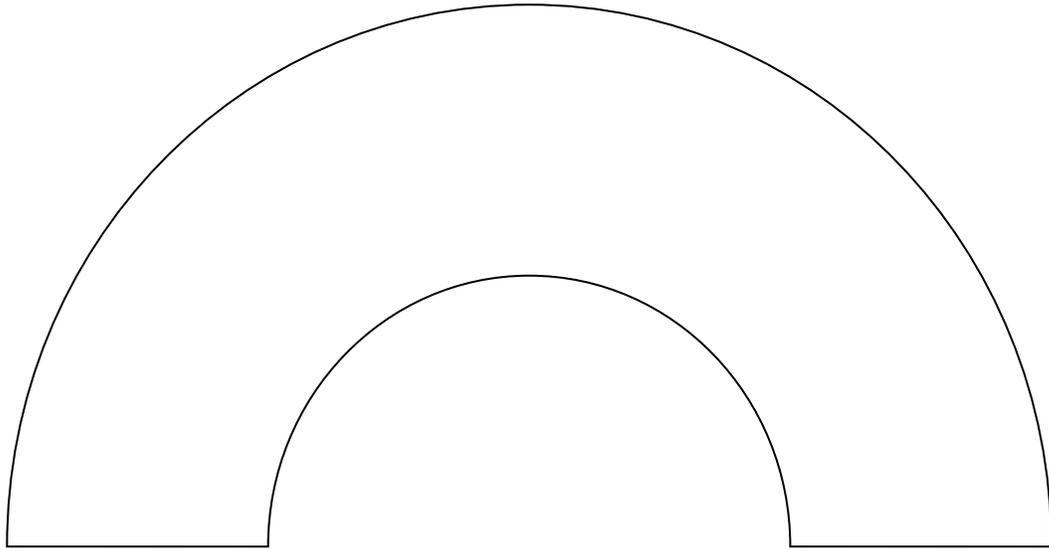
A Rainbow of Colors Activity Sheet

1. Share with your child that: We are all unique. We have different skin colors, eye colors, hair colors! This is what makes us each special and important.
2. Ask, “What are your favorite colors?” “How would you color the rainbow using *different* colors than a *typical* rainbow to show how unique *you* are?”
3. Use the Rainbow of Colors activity sheet to create a new rainbow of colors and share what makes you unique and why those colors are important to you.

Emoji Face Activity Sheet

1. Encourage your child to reflect on how they feel after listening to the song. Download and complete the Emoji activity sheet.
2. Explain that feelings are important – whether we feel happy, sad, scared, tired, afraid, excited, lonely or loved.
3. Share the image on the website and through social media. Make sure to tag the foundation and Raffi!

A RAINBOW OF COLORS



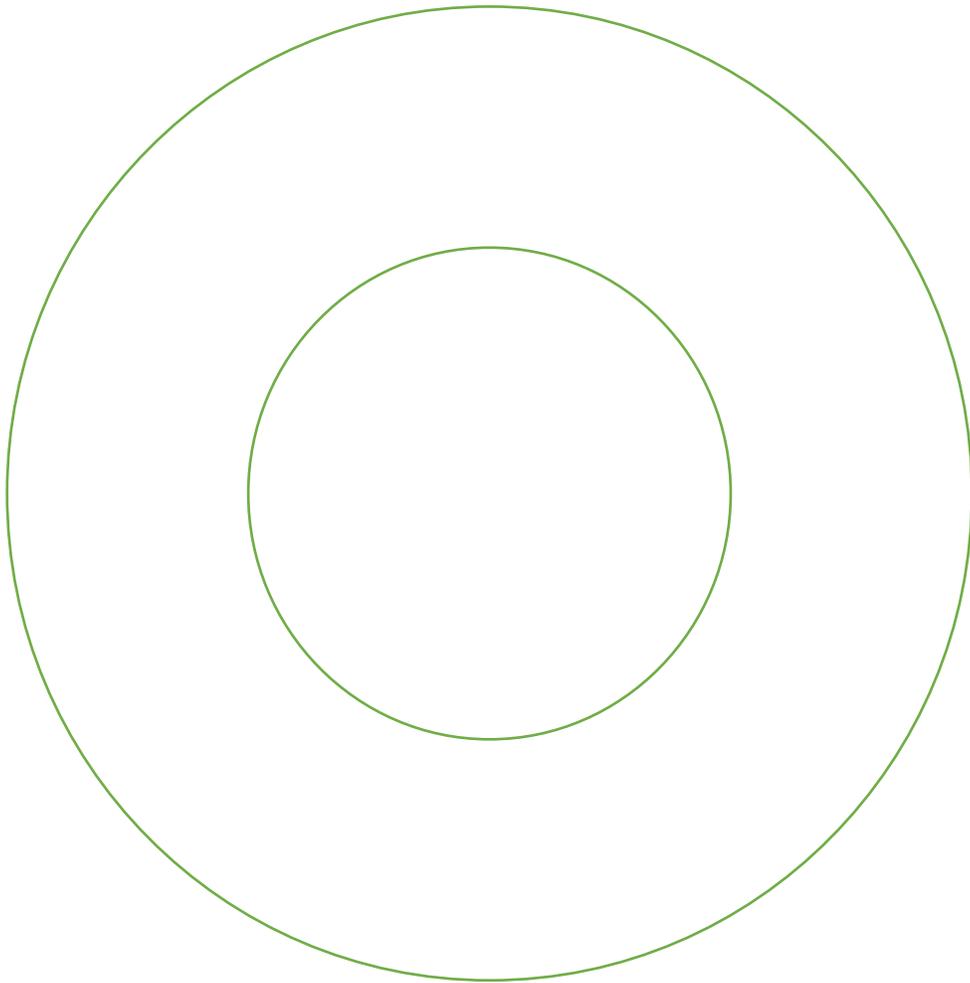
The colors in my rainbow are _____

These colors are important to me

because _____

Name: _____ Age: _____

EMOJI FACE ACTIVITY



This emoji face outline shows how I would feel if someone treated me, my family or a friend badly just because of our skin color.

I feel this way because _____

Name: _____ Age: _____

Tweens (ages 10-12)

These activities connect to the Child Honouring philosophy by teaching young adults that their voices are important and should be heard. The song references Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. through his vision and his voice for equality and equity and the quote: “let freedom ring.” Through these activities, young adults will have the opportunity to reflect on those important words, share their own words of inspiration and paint a portrait of freedom.

Before Listening:

Talk to your child about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. by sharing examples of his work and legacy – there are videos and clips available for children to hear him speak, the power of his voice, his messages, and how he empowered individuals – adults and youth.

Some topics can include why we celebrate his birthday (January 18, 2021), the change he advocated for through his speeches, the important march through Selma, Alabama and his work in championing civil rights.

During Listening:

Give your child/children a journal, notebook or print the “Words of Inspiration” activity sheet. Ask them to write down ten words that inspire them as they listen to the song. They can also draw an image, picture, or sketch.

You should also keep a journal, notebook or a copy of the activity sheet to document the words that inspire you.

After Listening:

Talk with your children about the lyrics in the song by inviting them to respond to the question “What does Black Lives Matter mean *to you?*”

Expand the discussion by sharing how BLM is an important movement in our world, where people in the black community want to be treated equally and fairly - where we need to take *actions* to create *change*.

Pause for time for reflection. Ask - “What does it mean to take action?” “What would you say if you had the chance to create change?” Talk about the words that they wrote down. Look for similarities between your responses. Reflect on how you interpreted the song in the same way, or differently.

ACTIVITIES

Words of Inspiration

1. Share the words that each of you wrote down while listening to the song.
2. Compare which words of inspiration are the same and different. Discuss why those words came to mind and how do the words make you feel? How does it help you to understand the Black Lives Matter movement?
3. List ten words on the Words of Inspiration activity sheet that help you to feel connected and inspired by the “Black Lives Matter to Me” song.

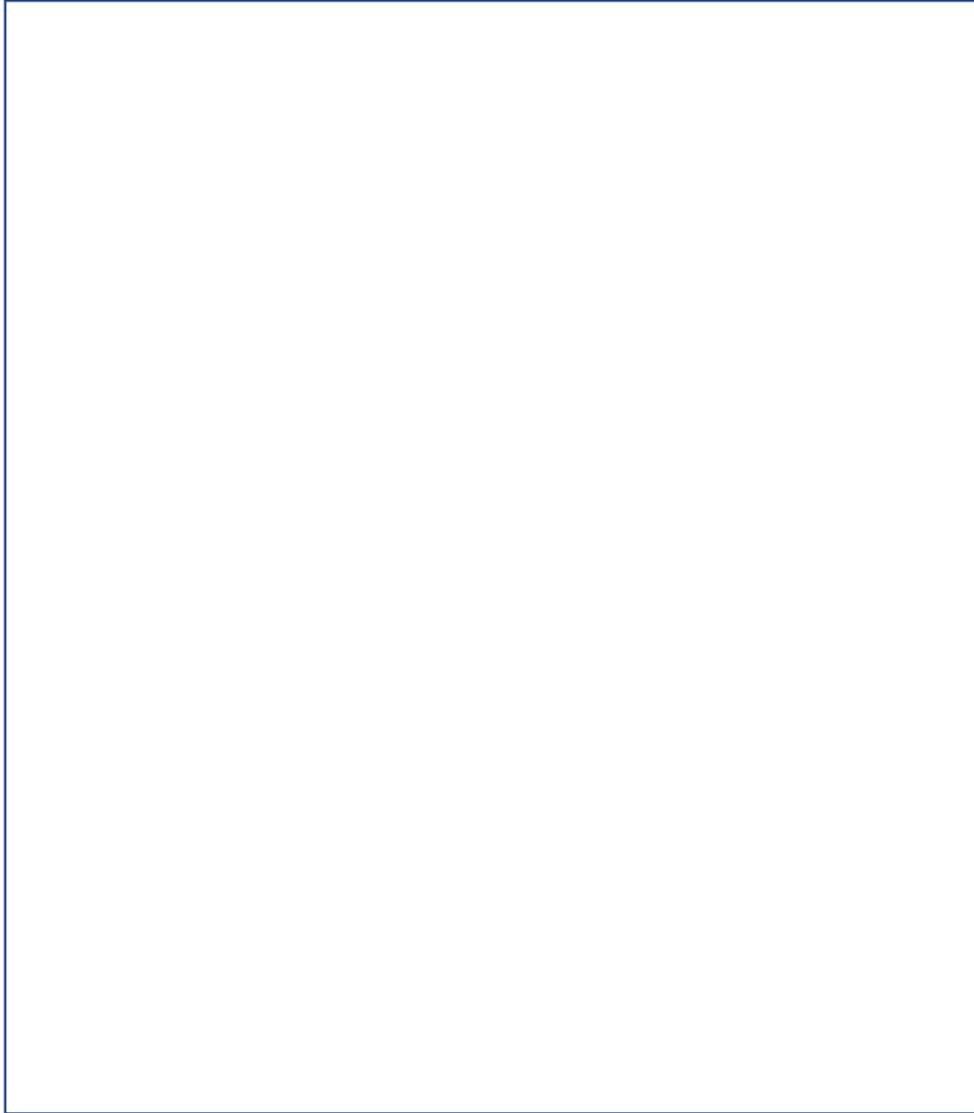
Colors of Freedom

1. Listen to the song and pause after Raffi repeats the words of Dr. King: “Let freedom ring.”
2. Ask, “What does it mean for freedom to ring?”
3. Using the “Colors of Freedom” activity sheet, invite your child/young adult to create a collage - either by drawing or cutting and pasting different shapes and images from magazines, papers or the internet.
4. Discuss with them, “What does freedom sound like and *look* like to you?”

WORDS OF INSPIRATION

Name: _____ Age: _____

COLORS OF FREEDOM



Name: _____ Age: _____

Adolescents (ages 13-18)

These activities connect to the Child Honouring philosophy and in particular, the principles of Respectful love, Diversity and Caring Community, by teaching adolescents that their voices matter, that they have a right and purpose to a peaceful protest, to stand up for what they believe in and to feel empowered.

Before Listening:

Talk about a moment that was inspiring, upsetting, exciting, infuriating or challenging that made you feel you needed stand up, and speak out, and make change.

Invite a bigger conversation – whether just you and your child, or their friends, or class. Talk about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. by asking what they know of his work, why his name is important to our history, and by sharing examples of his work and legacy.

During Listening:

Sit together in a safe and quiet space, listening to the song together.

After Listening:

Talk with your child(ren) about the lyrics in the song by inviting them to respond to the question “What does Black Lives Matter mean *to you*?” Emphasize that your voice matters in supporting the Black Lives Matter movement.

Expand the discussion by asking how they felt during the actions that took place during 2020. Reflect on and ask “how did you feel when you learned about Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and the many other individuals who were treated unfairly and profiled because of their race?”

Discuss how various communities around the world collectively demonstrated their beliefs through peaceful protests – marching together with signs, speaking words, singing, talking, crying, and fighting for what they believed in – *that Black Lives Matter*.

Continue the conversation by returning back to the words of Dr. King by asking:

“What are the similarities and differences from the challenges Dr. King faced in the 1960s, compared to today?”

“How does the tone of the song connect to and reflect on the Black Lives Matter movement?”
(this can be expanded to why did Raffi choose a softer, slower melody, accompanied by bongos and ukulele – how would *you* have composed the song differently?)

“What would *you* want to protest for/against, and why?”

ACTIVITIES

My Musical Voice

1. Listen again to the song, “Black Lives Matter To Me.”
2. Pause the song after the first verse and read-aloud the lyrics, either alone or together:

*Black lives matter
Of course they matter
Black lives matter To me*

3. Listen to the following verse. Pause the song again and re-write the lyrics and ask: “What would you write after hearing the opening three lines?” “What lyrics would you add to the song?”
4. Continue the conversation by asking: “How does Raffi’s song connect with the Black Lives Matter movement?”

“What are the similarities and differences from the challenges Dr. King faced in the 1960s, compared to today?”
5. Write your lyrics on the “My Musical Voice” activity voice. If you are even more inspired, use an online platform such as TikTok or YouTube to record and share your version of the song.

Peaceful Protest

1. Invite a conversation on protesting: “What does it mean to protest and why would someone or a group of individuals choose to do so?”
2. Explain how a peaceful protest is a way to demonstrate that a cause is important to you. There are many examples of how great civil rights leaders have led peaceful protests. This includes Mahatma Gandhi standing up for Indian rights and freedom and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. marching for civil rights and Black lives.
3. Continue the conversation by returning back to the words of Dr. King of “Let freedom ring.” Ask what you would protest in support of and why?
4. Use the questions on the “Peaceful Protest” activity sheet to expand the conversation and share the responses through written responses to the questions and/or an image or visualization that symbolizes your protest.

MY MUSICAL VOICE

*Black lives matter
Of course they matter
Black lives matter to me*

Black Lives Matter To Me

Name: _____ Age: _____

PEACEFUL PROTEST

1. *What is the cause, movement, activity or event that makes you want to protest, speak, and stand up and be heard?*
2. *What event inspired you?*
3. *Who would be involved?*
4. *If you were to support a peaceful protest, where would it take place to ensure the safety of everyone attending and those observing?*
5. *What are the challenges you imagine you will have to overcome?*
6. *What images, songs, or videos would accompany your protest, help your voice to be heard?*

Please share or create an image or visualization that represents your purpose, perspective, and protest. Consider why you chose that symbol or image? Would it mean the same thing in ten years? Twenty years?

Name: _____ Age: _____