

FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES

Matter

A short one by Idris Goodwin

June 2020 Version

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KIM – A black woman, young adult, educated, progressive

COLE – A white man, young adult, educated, progressive

The Asides: The actors speak to us---sometimes in the midst of a scene
They should also say the words in bold---who gets assigned what
may be determined by director and ensemble

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PRESENTATION HISTORY:

#Matter has received staged readings and development with Jackalope Theatre, The Black Lives Black Words Series and Colorado College

It was fully produced by Actors Theatre of Louisville in Jan 2017 and The Bush Theatre in the UK in March 2017

It is published in Black Lives, Black Words: 32 Short Plays edited by Reginald Edmund (Oberon) and also the forthcoming Papercuts Anthology: Year 2 (Cutlass Press)

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"Black lives matter. White lives matter. All lives matter."
--Democratic Presidential Candidate Martin O'Malley, 2015

Prologue

COLE

We lived next door to each other. As kids

KIM

And now---same city

COLE

We were never that close during any of it

But we knew each other

KIM

I'd see him here and there

COLE

We were aware of one another

KIM

We kept our space

Not consciously

We just ran in different spaces

COLE

But we were always aware

COLE

Social war

KIM

Another body.

Another name. Another image

Has circulated. The latest body

Name. The newest image to haunt

COLE

It's shameful

KIM

I posted

This is no time for apathy

I liked it
COLE

The fight for equality continues on
KIM

Liked it!
COLE

And then I typed a hash tag and three words
Words I thought anyone could get behind
KIM

I ---didn't---quite---like that
COLE

I responded with: A hash tag and three words. Nothing offensive. Words I thought anyone could get behind

I didn't quite like it so I deleted it
KIM

She deleted my response. Totally hypocritical
COLE

My wall, my space. And yeah I edit it
It's the one space where I can build the world I'd like to inhabit
KIM

I respond to her posts a lot. We share the same algorithm. Politically
COLE

My response was to remove it
KIM

Erasure is never okay so I responded
This is not a race issue, not really---this is about abuse of power
COLE

I responded
Are you crazy!
KIM

I responded
We're talking about equality
COLE

*The human experience
no time for stark divisions along racial lines
This is a time for us to recognize our shared humanity*

KIM

I deleted it

COLE

I messaged her

KIM

He messaged me

COLE

We haven't seen each other in a while or spoken
The last time was at a concert
She was a little mad at me
Because the mc performed a song with the n word in the chorus
And she saw me sing along
And she never said anything
But after the show
She was cold to me

KIM

He messaged me

COLE

*Hey Kim
I know it's been a while*

KIM

He felt like we needed to talk
Needed to clear the air

COLE

Can we sit down for coffee sometime

COLE

Sitting down

KIM

I want to ask you what you meant
but I'm finding it hard to ask you

What I would rather do is just tell you
what I think

about what I thought you meant

COLE

I can explain what I meant

KIM

I am sure you can
But can you explain what I read
And what I took it to mean?

COLE

I just meant that we are all comprised of matter
Matter being that essential molecular element of which we are all built
Ordinary matter like trees and water
Solids and liquids

KIM

But sounds, the voice for example, was not always considered matter
Matter used to only encompass a select set of solid objects

COLE

But all along, it was all matter

KIM

What happens to matter split? Does it explode and decimate millions of bodies of color? And whose hands split that matter? What we are talking about are black lives split, shaken until they become bombs

COLE

“Their lives, those lives” ---its all ridiculous
We’re here—and we can decide the way this is going to go
This doesn’t have to---shouldn’t be
And we---us---we don’t have to ascribe

COLE

An Aside

There was that summer after senior year of high school. We were both short on credits. All our friends took off. We had to stick around. We both ended up working at the Library to make extra cash. We kinda got close that summer. We talked about books. Smoked joints on lunch break. That was the summer I got into R&B and I turned her on to some indie rock. I thought, “man what a cool chick”

There was that one night after our shift. We got those tall cans and decided to break into the school.

We heard someone---so we ducked into the only open room we could find. The Chemistry room. It was dark in there and we were super quiet...we drank more and started to get close. Maybe it was because things were coming to an end. We got close to...but we didn't ---she stopped suddenly---said she had to go home

We are on the same side Kim
COLE

Are we?
KIM

Yes! We want the same thing
COLE

KIM
After another man is laying in the street
Your immediate impulse is to correct me---to talk semantics with me
To say *Well, actually Kim...*
I don't know what side that is

An Aside

In particle physics, antimatter is material composed of antiparticles; which have the same mass as particles of ordinary matter but have an opposite charge

I don't think anyone is less or more
Or special
COLE

When we say BlackLivesMatter
Do you think that's us saying we're special?
"Look at us?! We're getting shot---"
KIM

COLE	KIM
<p>No but its sort of making your suffering worse than others Wait--- that's not what I mean It's saying your suffering is--- I mean---what about in Africa ---all the boko haram stuff Or women all over the world being assaulted Or Gays and Lesbians Hispanics being deported, shot at border crossings Or hell, even poor white folks who live in black communities Who're bullied because of the crimes of others And and and I'm all for civil rights but looting? Property damage and just rage? It doesn't work--- I mean---it's not strategic All lives Kim That's all I am saying---lets pull the act from the context of race We have to break this down to the root Human wickedness</p>	<p>Uhm...what did you just</p> <p>Okay but we're....</p> <p>Cole...Cole...</p> <p>No-No-No</p> <p>You don't...</p>

KIM

And sometimes humans kill humans because of their race

(a breath)

COLE

Wouldn't it be great if---
 I just wish we could move on. Be ourselves---be individuals---- our own perfect stars- ---just be our own perfect stars—

When we were kids---when we'd have a block party all the kids would be out---getting our faces painted like spider man—bike races---we were just---kids in the neighborhood. When did we start---

KIM

I was the only black kid at that block party

COLE

I didn't see it like that

KIM

You didn't see I was black?

COLE

I didn't treat you different

KIM

But not everybody was like you

COLE

An Aside

She wasn't always like this

KIM

An Aside

I was silent. I used to be silent.

COLE

She used to be real easy going. A cool chick.

KIM

I used to hold my breath. Breathe shallow. Up here in my chest.

COLE

We grew up the same way

KIM

But the way we are perceived is different

COLE

But that doesn't mean those perceptions are true

KIM

The water and the tree are in the same forest but not the same

Different mass

Different volume

Different uses

Are you willing to decrease your mass?

Just say it

Black
Lives
Matter

COLE

Do white lives *not* matter?

KIM

Nobody is saying what *doesn't* matter

COLE

But its ---exclusionary

KIM

Its contextual---in this climate---it relates to the splitting of black atoms with no consequence

COLE

An Aside

I really want to leave. I feel sick.
I want to hug Kim. And tell her I'm sorry
but also ---if I'm being honest
tell her to get over it.
life is hard and there is no measuring stick for suffering.
She can change this---just by being her self---not this angry black woman

KIM

An Aside

I really want to let Cole off the hook. Drop this whole thing. Tell him it's all good. But I have
swallowed myself so many times to make white folks feel less uncomfortable.

COLE

I just want to fix it.

KIM

Cole wants to know how we fix it. Wants me to tell him but I just woke up this way. I don't
know how to dig into the hearts, rewire the circuitry? Who does? All I am trying to do is keep it
together.

COLE

I want to tell her I am sorry.

KIM

I don't need apologies. I just want it to stop.

COLE

To say it---is to admit---that ---my life---in someone's eyes---people living, people dead has mattered more than other folks'

And I don't think it does---but someone at some point has believed that---and maybe my life has been better because of that—

KIM

That night in the Chemistry room---when we got close---Cole and I all those years ago---I was into it---I liked him---until he put his hands in my hair.

I thought about all those kids in school always asking to touch it. *Can I touch it.* And how they'd react when they did. And he had his hands in my hair and I wondered how he thought it felt. Weird? Funny? Good? Then I thought about if he'd been with any black girls before and it was too much so I told him I had to go home. So I did. I left and that was the closest we ever got.

Kim exits

COLE

Week or two later I sent Kim a message. I thanked her for the conversation. I told her we should be in touch more often. That I wanted to keep talking. Not just about this. But our lives in general.nothing.

That was that I thought

But one morning I went on my timeline . I saw her picture and her name being shared by everyone.

They called it.....a failure to comply.....failure to be silentso she was made silent.....forever

She lives on now—as a hashtag

But I still hear her voice hanging in the particles.

Does a spirit.... have mass? It must. I can feel the weight.

END OF PLAY

