

# Andrea Ambam, Western Kentucky University

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

activist, died, garner, feel, screaming, state sanctioned violence, heart, yates, activism, breathe, stress, huffington post, protester, clench, black lives matter, bullet, browder, fight, chalk outlines, national tv

## SPEAKERS

Andrea Ambam

**A** Andrea Ambam 00:16  
It don't always be a bullet. Sometimes we bleed from the inside out. Sometimes we clench fists so tight that the heart clench too. Blood pressure, rising like a voice through a megaphone. Like the judge after no indictment. Mrs. Yates, 32, lay curled in bed for days, paralyzed by the stresses of life. The police killing of Michael Brown spurred Ashley Yates into activism. After suffering a heart attack last weekend, local activist in the Black Lives Matter movement, Erica Garner, has died. I don't want to be an activist today, because I care about all these names, too many names. And the TV told me another tragic story. Another antagonist cop, another protagonist shot and here I am again screaming at the screen while the plot thickens. Activist and mother of Kalief Browder has died of heart complications. Mrs. Yates, would evolve from street protester in Ferguson, to Black Lives Matter organizer in Oakland. And like you all know

**A** Andrea Ambam 01:37  
She felt so depressed she could

**A** Andrea Ambam 01:41

barely get out of bed.

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Andrea Ambam 01:44

She was reminded of the dire consequences of an activist's life:

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Andrea Ambam 01:50

untimely death.

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Andrea Ambam 01:53

You see how melancholy make you a mortuary? Wow, how we rally on them front lines til we flatline. It don't always be a bullet.

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Andrea Ambam 02:09

But we've been triggered

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Andrea Ambam 02:12

for decades.

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Andrea Ambam 02:19

Venida Browder in 2016 and Erica Garner in 2017. Two women, both thrust into lifelong activism after losing a loved one to state sanctioned violence. However, both die unexpectedly with heart complications. Erica Garner was 27 years old. As the New York Times amends on March 27 2018, For activists across the country, this story is all too familiar. Over the past two years, at least five prominent Black Lives Matter activists have died with cause of death ranging from heart attacks to suicide. This disturbing pattern unveils a new obstacle social justice movements must address: the physical toll of activism. When we're not being taken out by state sanctioned violence, the stress of fighting that violence is doing the job. So to the poetry, "I don't want to be an activist today" by Rage Almighty and "be a bullet" by Latoya Bee. The drama "sheetcaking this protest" from SNL, and an interview with Erica Garner from Like it or Not, in the articles for the New York Times, Vice, the Huffington Post, a program. Because for too long, they've been taking us out by wearing us out. On a medical level, protesters in these fight or flight states experience racing hearts, elevated blood pressure and an inability to digest food, leading to feelings of anxiety, paranoia, and a distrust of things that would normally make

them feel safe. I don't know, a lot of us are feeling um,

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Andrea Ambam 04:02

anxious and so I encourage you this Saturday

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Andrea Ambam 04:06

instead of going out participating in the screaming matches and potential violence find a local business you support. Maybe a

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Andrea Ambam 04:16

African American run bakery. Order a cake

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Andrea Ambam 04:19

with the American flag on it

A

Andrea Ambam 04:22

like this one. And um, just eat it.

A

Andrea Ambam 04:31

Miss Yates remembered Miss Garner and saw herself. If someone as widely recognized as Miss Garner can meet her demise, then who in the movement was safe? My father, you know,

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Andrea Ambam 04:52

died

A

Andrea Ambam 04:54

on national TV. Now I'm in this fight forever, no matter how long it takes. 10, 20 years we deserve justice, because the system beats you down to where you can't win. I mean, look at Kalief Browder's mother, she died of a broken heart. I don't want to be an activist today. This heart hasn't repaired itself from the last time it broke all over the Huffington Post.

Just want to cut the umbilical cord from the bullhorn in my stomach. Because I feel more like an undertaker than an activist don't worry guys don't worry. Sheetcaking is a grassroots movement.

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Andrea Ambam 05:40

So the next time you see a bunch of white boys screaming about taking our country back and you wanna scream, "IT'S NOT OUR COUNTRY, YOU STOLE IT!" When you wanna yell that, don't yell it at the

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Andrea Ambam 05:55

Klan, just enjoy the cake. Want to know how to kill a protest? Let life kill the protester. Let stress drown the revolt. How can you say her name when you're gasping for air? Your own burial: the only sit in you can attend. You can't organize with dreams of chalk outlines reaching for your throat, waking up screaming, panting, searching for phantom exit wounds. I feel that same way my father felt when he was screaming I can't breathe when he was saying he was dying of being arrested. You know tired of being freakin' harassed. I had to see my dad die on national TV.

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Andrea Ambam 06:50

You know, a lot of people don't get to see their parents die.

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Andrea Ambam 06:55

And I'm struggling right now with the stress and everything.

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Andrea Ambam 07:00

Cuz this thing like, beats you down and I can't breathe because I'm tired of drinking mourning in my coffee. And it's not just that I'm tired of fighting. I'm tired of having to fight. There's a revolution widening in my rib cage but I feel a blue wall of silence kneeling on my neck

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Andrea Ambam 07:23


and I can't breathe

- A Andrea Ambam 07:26  
I can't breathe
- A Andrea Ambam 07:28  
I can't
- A Andrea Ambam 07:39  
I can.
- A Andrea Ambam 07:42  
I can feel the pain you feel right now.
- A Andrea Ambam 07:48  
That's weighing down on you.
- A Andrea Ambam 07:52  
Please
- A Andrea Ambam 07:54  
don't let it take you out.
- A Andrea Ambam 07:57  
We need you
- A Andrea Ambam 08:00  
Now
- A Andrea Ambam 08:02  
more than ever,

- A Andrea Ambam 08:04  
It's time to use radical self care as a form of resistance.
- A Andrea Ambam 08:15  
So,
- A Andrea Ambam 08:19  
beginning
- A Andrea Ambam 08:21  
by breathing in and out slowly
- A Andrea Ambam 08:30  
let go of your thoughts.
- A Andrea Ambam 08:37  
Now close your eyes
- A Andrea Ambam 08:40  
and if you feel comfortable, please repeat after me: In this time I will not think of death or pain
- A Andrea Ambam 08:59  
in this time trouble will not leave my lips. In this time, I will allow joy to know my heart again.
- A Andrea Ambam 09:19  
In this time
- A Andrea Ambam 09:22

I am at ease with the world around me.

 **A** Andrea Ambam 09:54  
Exhale.

 **A** Andrea Ambam 09:59  
Open your eyes