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## **I Could Not Breathe**

### *Spoken Word*

“When I woke up today, I could not breathe.”

I hope that when I wake up one day in the future, that phrase does not reluctantly crawl from my mouth. For if I am tasked to carry a mask on my face and a tank on my back because our atmosphere lacks the oxygen it once used to have, that is no longer breathing. That is the arduous repetition of muscle contractions and relaxations, blackened lungs do not breathe.

As Small Island Developing Nations, we are letting industrialization pollute our habitations. Here is my revelation: Murder is a crime, stealing is a crime, damage to property is a crime. Pollution is doing all of these things and unfortunately we cannot even sentence it with time. What time? The time we let others destroy our earth while climate change affects little guys like us the worst?

It is unfortunate that we are stuck with this small island mentality. Let's go people, this is reality. If we tell ourselves that climate change only affects those who cause it, it means we tell ourselves to stay in closed mind-sets. While we do not generate most of the pollution, we have to see that we stand the greatest to lose. We need to mitigate this before more damage ensues.

This damage level grows exponentially with the sea level rise. As Small Island developing states our coastal ecosystems are our pride, and we cannot let them be erased by the changing of the tides. Our world has two hemispheres but we are all on the same side.

As SIDS many things define us, but most of them are not positive. We are remote with limited resources and international dependence that is repetitive. As SIDS, we have stifled economies; environmental, natural and many other kinds of vulnerabilities. We need sustainable development. In other words, we implement and be congruent. Whether we are Caribbean, Pacific or off the African or Asian continent, this is certain; We have to protect our future before it closes the curtain.

As SIDS, we are equatorial. While the cooler climates are becoming less cool, we are becoming even hotter. Who do think will end up as international squatters? Our sea level increases decrease our land area. This change is a flash flood, so let us not drown in our homes, while corals turn chrome. Let's not forget about Sudden Infant Death Syndrome or SIDS.

If we continue to be exploited, it will only leave us poor. I wake up that day thinking, “I don't know this world anymore”. As I look at the desert oceans, I see the environmental chore when Mother Nature's biodiversity hits the floor. I wake up to a world I no longer wish to explore, as beads of sweat gambol from pores.

When waters are dystopian but there is no Lethe, when acidified calcium phosphate is teathed. When the chlorophylled world is no longer there on which to cleave... When I wake up and I could not breathe.