

Why we should care about **#BLACKLIVESMATTER**

AAHIR MRITTIKA

The incident that sparked the momentum of #BlackLivesMatter movement happened on the other side of the globe, and yet, young people in Bangladesh are hurt.

They are condensing complex information—institutionalised racism, how South Asians propagate it, cultural appropriation—using resources on Instagram and Facebook. A plethora of articles, podcasts, movies, and books, are being shared around as people have voluntarily begun to educate themselves and others. I see petitions and donation links up on everyone's bio, and we're even coming up with alternative ways to help. It's remarkable that the concept of racism, something many of us don't face directly, managed to infuriate us to this extent. It's important for many different reasons, and one of them is how this serves as a point of reflection.

Look around you, do you know someone from a minority group being denied their rights? Sexism, prejudice based on religion, colourism—human beings are judged and opportunities are withheld based on unfair criteria in schools, workplaces, and even in our homes. Dehumanising others based on an arbitrary factor isn't new. I believe many of us

are guilty of doing it, some consciously and some unknowingly. Even if someone isn't directly partaking in discriminatory behaviour, staying neutral still makes one guilty.

This is a good opportunity to think about all those times you ridiculed someone because of their ethnicity, bullied boys for being "feminine", or made a sexist remark. I recently saw someone, who continues to use transphobic language to "roast" their friends, post a long note on how they've educated themselves on the history of the n-word. While it's great that so many of us are learning to be more sensitive, being selective with what you want to support is unethical and performative (and possibly bandwagoning). Being a tolerant and thoughtful person means finding all forms of discrimination abhorrent.

We need to figure out how to create positive changes in our own environment. Experiencing the BLM movement has equipped us with knowledge on how powerful and useful social media is. We raised funds just by streaming YouTube videos filled with ads, and learned about artists of colour at the same time. We're using our personal accounts as platforms to share and discuss relevant news. Conversations aren't limited to any age groups or news outlets, allowing us a diversity of opinions. Statistics and

complicated concepts are presented in constructive formats like short videos or flashy posters. It's possible to create awareness on important issues with some well coordinated clicks of some buttons. This generation is now equipped to support local artists, to raise funds for RMG workers suffering from low incomes, and to stand against the injustices minority groups face.

We can't only limit ourselves to posting on social media once a while when it's trendy. We have to be active in real life as well. If you witness your friends having toxic locker room banter objectifying women, make sure you hold them accountable. If your parent uses a racial or religious slur, inform them on why they're wrong in doing so. I know it can be incredibly exhausting to get your points across but since we understand how social conditioning works, we have a responsibility to target and break down problematic mindsets. It may be difficult for us to participate in protests halfway across the world, but we can sure use it as a point of reflection from where we can start bringing positive change.

Aahir Mrittika likes to believe she's a Mohammadpur local, but she's actually a nerd. Catch her studying at mrittikaahir@gmail.com

Mother Nature vs 2020: *A half-time pep talk*

PROTEETI AHMED

Okay. So, you've somehow managed to make the last 45 minutes go on for about half a year. It's almost as if this is a year-long game for you and you've successfully managed to mess everything up continuously for six months. Come on guys, don't you remember what this team is? You are 2020. You were supposed to be *the* team. But instead you're letting Mother Nature plough their way through you—quite literally.

If you're going to be adamant in prolonging your own suffering, remember this: by the first 15 minutes of this game, you managed to let Mother Nature set your world on fire, cause floods and earthquakes, and then start killing you off with a new virus. You managed to almost start a third world war and impeach a US president all by yourself. But then the virus really decided to show up. China, we were rooting for you. Iran, what happened?

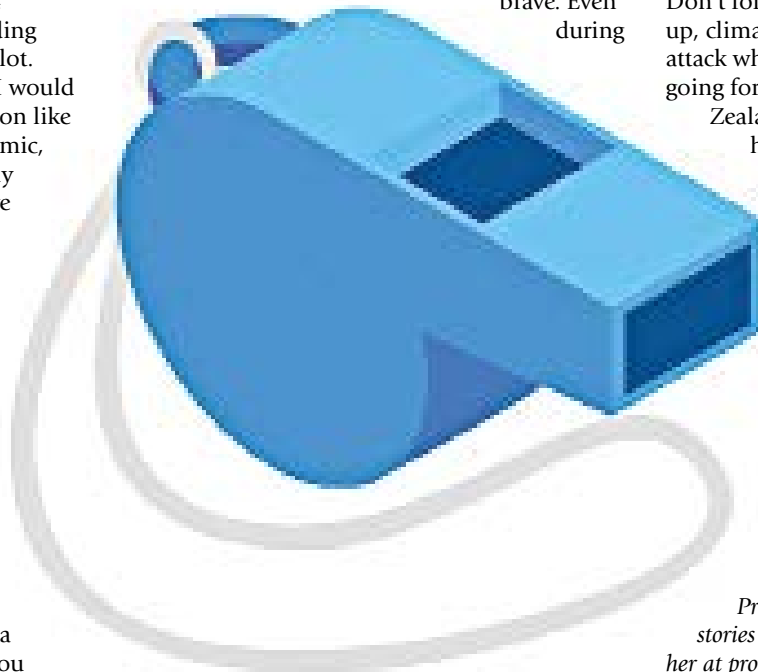
By the 30th minute, Mother Nature had you crippled. Italy, you went down first, and then the rest of you guys; France, Spain and the UK decided to follow suit. It's like you can't even see Germany and South Korea labouring up and down the

wings, the only ones among you who really tried. At one point near the end, it was like there was only New Zealand carrying you along. Good going, Kiwis, more of the same in the next half, yeah? And you, Canada, you can't just flip your hair through everything, eh?

But I am done reprimanding you. You've been through a lot. Some might say too much. I would describe your current situation like this, you're fighting a pandemic, and that's not even your only immediate priority. You have a Herculean task in front of you: facing Mother Nature—while she's winning. However, this is the beautiful game, and you can definitely bring this home.

Yes, you're only half-way through and you've conceded four goals, but I know you have what it takes. You've proven it time and time again. Japan, you've been through hell and back. Forget about a postponed Olympics. UK, you

can handle it all—Brexit, and even the royal breakup. From balcony concerts, to mastering cooking skills, to just being generally wholesome when humanity needs it. I have also seen you be fierce and brave. Even during



the first half, I noticed you standing up to the occasion and fighting injustice. Keep that spirit up!

Let's regroup, focus, and try harder. You have heroes among you. Remember them. Don't let them down, and don't give up. Don't forget to breathe. Keep your guard up, climate change and inequality will attack when you least expect it. We're going for a defensive 5-4-1 this half, New Zealand up front. For the remaining half of this game you are, each of you, entire nations with fire and spirit.

You know what? You don't have to win against Mother Nature. You just have to be your best selves. You just have to continue to do what you've shown the potential for, what you've shown you're capable of. And then go do it for those who are no longer with you but paved the way, and for those you haven't met yet. Because you can.

Proteeti Ahmed is trying. Share life stories that also follow Murphy's Law with her at proteeti.14@gmail.com