

My project is a commentary on the lack of media representation and urgency around missing Black women and girls in America. Throughout history, there has been a clear discrepancy between white children and children of color. This includes the start of the missing person epidemic which revolved around the disappearance of a young white boy. As a part of my research, I explored the history of missing children on milk cartons and the effects that the media had on the recovery of missing children. The recovery rates for Black children are only 24% and that reflects the lack of resources, media coverage, and empathy. When looking at the epidemic statistics as a whole, I realized that if I were to go missing the efforts to find me, it could differ greatly from what would happen if one of my white peers were to go missing.

These milk cartons are a way to highlight the juxtaposition of the missing person coverage in America that has always been in favor of those who are white. The women featured on the sides of the cartons include me and some of my peers. The name of the milk company, *Vanished Meadows*, represents those that have gone missing, and meadows can be located in cities, the suburbs, and rural communities. The project includes multiple 3-dimensional pieces that are supposed to poke fun at the traditional missing person milk carton. The nutrition facts are all statistics related to the epidemic and highlight the unlikelihood of our return if we were to go missing. As of right now, Black children are 2x more likely to remain missing. My goal for this project is to help change that. It is a non-traditional way of highlighting a cause. Though we aren't all from the same place, we all fit under the same demographic, we are Black women and society has demonstrated time and again that our lives don't matter.

Lastly, the project includes quotes that came directly from each participant. As printed on each carton, I wanted to shine a light on the vanished voices. I wanted this project to capture the concerns of the people that this topic affects the most. The voices that go unheard. I hope to see the day where a young white woman's life isn't chosen over mine. I hope to see the day where everyone is represented in the media equally. I hope to see the day when Black Lives Matter to all and not just those who are Black.

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**COMMITTED TO GIVING THE
UNHEARD A VOICE THROUGH ART.**

**64,000 Black women and girls
are missing**

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ABOUT US

Meaningful Voices is a website created to spread awareness around the disproportionate rate of missing black women and girls, and women of color at large. This was created to highlight the injustice within the laws and legislations in the United States, that are created to benefit one specific racial demographic. Through sharing this information, I hope to generate the appropriate motivation to find these missing black youth and motivate others to demand equality in the criminal defense system. There are thousands of children that go missing each year and thousands of families that are wishful for their children's return.

Why did I decide to speak out about this? It could be me or one of my friends. This occurred to me one day when I was getting off the subway near my house in New York City. A middle-aged black man handed me a flyer with a girl who could have been me. She was a freshman at Brooklyn Tech and had gone missing. Once receiving this flyer I couldn't help but think about how close this subject is to me. It made me realize how this is present in almost every young woman of color's life. Regardless of where she lives. My parents have armed me with wise words and advice for when on the street but that can't stop all the other young women being taken every year. When looking at statistics, all I could think about was the likelihood of my family getting the appropriate resources and help if I were to go missing.

My hope for this website is for it to serve as an unconventional way for people to be educated on an important cause that affects thousands of Americans yearly. I see this as the necessary information to educate the public and the only way for this cause to get a voice. This is meant to highlight injustice throughout history up until today.

Brief History

Throughout history, there has always been a discrepancy between the treatment of minorities and white people. When it comes to the missing person epidemic, it all started because a 6-year-old white boy named Etan Patz went missing in 1979. His picture was the first to be displayed on milk cartons, as a part of a campaign run by the National Child Safety Council to increase the spread of missing faces. Obviously there were people missing before this but this white boy was a priority and from it came more media attention. Authorities started to realize that the best way to spread the word of people's disappearance was on the side of a milk carton because it was published with more frequency. A police commander Joe Mayo said "Their faces will be there at the breakfast table.... People will have to think about it." This started a major trend of tunnel-visioned media towards missing white Americans. But as time continued America's focus drifted from young white boys to young white girls. This pattern has continued until today with television broadcast, Amber Alerts, and laws and legislation that prioritizes missing white females. Two of the most popular missing people cases are white women that are in their late teens or early 20's, Natalee Holloway and Maura Murray. These women and other missing white women have gained such presence in the media ranging from conspiracy theories to Netflix docuseries. Young women of color disappear at a disproportionate rate yet their stories never get told simply because of the color of the skin. Regardless of where they come from, the skin tone determines the way in which authorities and media support the families in their troublesome act of finding their children. Black children only make up 7% of media references and when mentioned in the media it is after a ton of push back. An example of this would be The Missing DC Girls Movement. It gaged media presence because people were demanding for authorities to help the families through the #MissingDCGirls.

Most of these women are labeled "runaways" causing them to be overlooked by the system and increasing the likelihood of them being sex trafficked and/or murdered. The disregard for these young women has always been present and continues to be as indigenous, black, and Latinx women become the targets of countless crimes. The question is, when will we give a voice to those communities who are frequently targeted.

