

*"I Can't Breathe,"* by Carl Dixon

art selection and comment by [John Kohan](#) in the [December 2, 2020](#) issue



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George Floyd's dying words on a Minneapolis street have become a lament for the nation. They appear in this carved panel, mixed-media piece by Carl Dixon as the text for what he calls a "sermon in wood" about the many ways people are struggling to breathe free in these troubled times. Beginning with an image of Floyd with the restraining knee of a police officer on his neck, the Mississippi folk artist shows sign-carrying protesters choking from tear gas and a COVID-19 patient on a

ventilator. The masked angels in heaven send the message that covering your face saves lives. The panel is dominated by a depiction of the crucified Christ, offering his last breath in an act of redemptive love. “We’re in a time now when none of us can breathe,” says Dixon. “We all feel this pressure weighing down on us and we want it to let up. That’s why I included Jesus on the cross. You know for sure that when he makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”