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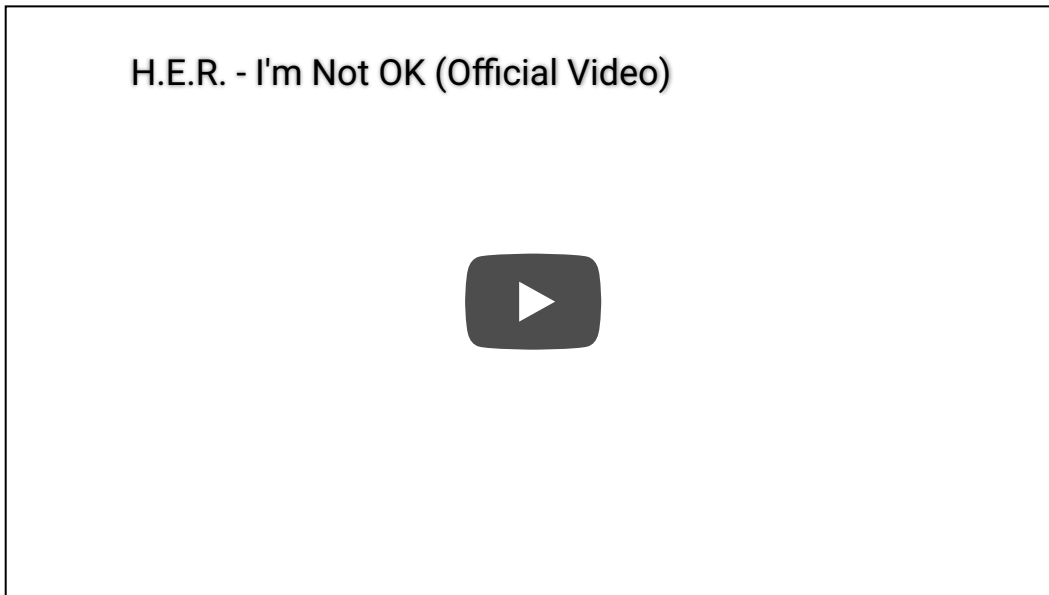
We Insist: A Timeline Of Protest Music In 2020

Black Mental Health Takes Center Stage In H.E.R.'s Video For 'I'm Not OK'

June 14, 2020 · 10:00 AM ET



TAYLOR CRUMPTON



YouTube

Nestled in the Black psyche is white supremacy, a parasitic leech that exists on the deterioration of the mind from the racialized trauma of police killings of Black people. Each hashtag and protest increases fear of victimization and mortality.

"I'm Not OK" by H.E.R. — a 2018 single re-released with an emotional video on June 14 — is an autobiographical depiction of trauma's manifestation on a physiological ("Sick to my stomach / Four in the morning, I can't sleep") and psychological ("Stressing the things that I can see / Where do you go? What do you do?") level. The progression of lines in the song's bridge and chorus resembles the symptoms of a panic attack, the feelings of being out of control and going crazy ("Please don't let me go / I don't know, I don't know"), the tightness in her chest ("Swear I feel / Hold me tight, hold me tight") and numbness ("I'm not okay / Losing my faith, I'm losing my faith / Slipping away, you're slipping away").

Yet, the lack of acceptance of mental health in the Black community has shifted the responsibility of rehabilitation on one's self instead of the systematic factors that triggered individuals in a state of purgatory, incarcerated within their own minds. The song's power is its truth, rooted in the vulnerability and humanity of Black people in a carceral state.

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H.E.R.