



CHAPTER 11

NAOMI OSAKA, TENNIS "KNOW YOUR HISTORY"

NO FANS WERE ALLOWED TO ATTEND LIVE SPORTING events in the COVID summer of 2020. For tennis players, that meant no roars in New York's Arthur Ashe Stadium, home to the biggest tournament on American soil, the US Open.

In this strange silence, though, one player made a ton of noise: Naomi Osaka.

A shy prodigy born in Japan to a Japanese mother and a Haitian-born father, Naomi had rocketed to the world's No. 1 ranking soon after beating Serena Williams in the 2018 US Open. Two years later, she used her newfound platform in a powerful way by single-handedly championing the cause of racial justice in the mostly white sport of tennis.

I'll never forget the climate in which athletes were playing that summer. When an unarmed Black man, George Floyd, was killed by a white police officer in Minnesota in May, his death touched off nationwide protests of police brutality that

Naomi's crackling serve helped her reach the semifinals of the 2025 US Open at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center.