

“I am a black poet who will not remain silent while this nation
continues to murder black people.
I have a right to be angry.”

**#BLACKPOETS
SPEAKOUT**

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No, Dear
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PROUD MEMBER
[clmp]

ode to the middle passage

i double and double under another. like spoon-fished, hooked into the splintered ship, we a gallery of bodies. i hear my bones purr. give a little song. a little salt. i rattle. my limbs folded. my folds creek, then hollow out into a flick. how long 'til we get there? i smell dyin'. i died hours ago. i'm hungry and my stomach begins to mummer like a blade of grass. i sick. i spew blood across the floor. or onto another black. or into the pile of excrement. i hear the white man's voice claw at the winds. i hope he opens us up for air. or for cleanin'. or to tease the shiver of sharks stalkin' behind. like we a festival of feed. like we bound to fill them up. he doesn't. i can't breathe. i try to breathe but the black next to me says quit hoggin' all the air. i shut up sometimes. clench my lungs 'til i'm plum in the face. the chains around my wrist tear through everythin'. skin pulled back. a fish out of water. i stretch what hip i got left. the black three rows away hums somethin' familiar: *amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me*. i join in. i hate being left out. the black above me joins in, coughs, then jingles their chains. the black below me is dead. we chained together. i continue to hum. the sea hums with us.

the black won't stop singin'. i look around. i steal air in slices. i look around, see mornin's flame serpentine. i look down, see blood freckled across my knee. is that mine? i an ailed bird with no song. the black won't stop singin'. i think a bee hive swallowed my tongue. i think of swallowin' everythin'. i try swallowin' myself. the black won't stop singin'. i scorpion my naked spine. i pry my beak. i dust. i pry my beak and the black won't stop singin'. i cough blood. i wet, slick into a wave. i think i'm drownin'. i ghost. i cup the ghost with my mouth. where did my tongue fly off to? i wave and fly and drown 'til the ship slow down. i down. the black won't stop singin'. i lose everythin'. i choir a rattle snake behind my eyelids. i eye my kneecap. is that my blood? i cough a ghost. the ghost spills my name. i bite into my lip to feel human. the flesh hangs from my beak. like a child gone astray. is that my blood? i attempt to mother. keep the child home. but the ocean flings the child into the dark. my child lost. i childless. the black won't stop singin'.

LARRY JACKSON

Unarmed. Killed by a police detective in Austin, TX on July 13, 2013.

We come with humble hearts and grateful souls. Knowing that there are artists able and willing to fearlessly express their outrage of the injustices that have been and are happening to our families is comforting. Families of police murders and police terror, such as ours, have a lot to contend with. You have to deal with the media bashing your loved one as if they are not the victim. You have to deal with the unexpected loss of your loved one and the many aspects that come with that. You have to deal with the fact that you may not see any justice, and that is a hard pill to swallow. What we want to say to you reader, is no matter what genre of artistry you perform in, let your light shine bright for those of us who are living these tragedies. When doing so, you help the families speak when it is difficult for them to speak or when they cannot; you help the families get their stories heard. You are fighting for something that is bigger than us all – JUSTICE!!! Your work is not in vain. Your work lets us know that we are not alone in this fight. Your work helps us to not feel so defeated. You are our allies. This work is tiresome and takes a toll on all of us. So from the bottom of our hearts we say thank you for your efforts in this fight for justice.

In Solidarity,
The Family of Larry E. Jackson, Jr.
Children, Mother, Father, Sister, Niece
April 4, 2016
Austin, TX

Stipulation of Fact

Louisiana say every man for himself
Carry a gun if you please
This the south
Ain't no equivocating down here
Steel and iron
Steel and iron
Red clay conspiracy of color
Sky salt-edged and heavy
Sun wooed by clouds
Plump as children
What part of red don't you get?

See Alton there trying to be
Somethin that knows pride
For itself...that good poetry?
He won't see 40.
How unoriginal.
How stamped in familiar tragedy.
We'll get to that.

In this faraway land
Women slide sons into coffins
That sit on top of the earth
Like brand new nickels
Swamps don't know how to keep corpses

Put a dead man's suit on the boy
Something marked down
Sleeves too long
Thrift store bargain
Cry a river
Regular
Wave goodbye
Tradition
Some of em can't be in an open casket
Some of em can't be identified
Empty sockets
Buckshot mouth
What part of red don't you get?

July keeps a score sheet here.
You gon lose regardless

the sky is genuflect. i headless. i pluck the sky from my neck. i spin my head
between my teeth and pray and watch the black move like an animal in dirt. i
dirt. i cling to everythin'. i body in a sack of skin. i body in a sack in a ship
headin' to the white man. i black in a black mouth with teeth the size of
mountains. i want to be white. i think white eats more. i think white smells the
fresh air. i think white says *i bleed* and gets fixed. i fixed in this skin. i black made
to slave, made to leave home. i home or *soon to be in the promise land* white man
says. i never knew promise outside my land's womb. i homeless. i homeless and
bodiless. i left my body to save myself. i save my breath, hear my lungs pout for
air.

breathe. breathe. breathe. don't. don't. don't. move. breathe. slow. slow. slower.
slower. slower. breathe. don't. don't. bleed. bleed. bleed. bleed. close. close. close.
close. breathe. breathe. slower. slower. slower. don't. slower. breathe. again.
again. again. bleed. bleed. bleed. embrace. embrace. embrace. ignore. ignore.
ignore. must. breathe. breathe. breathe. look. look. look. look. look. slower.
breathe. slower. must. bleed. bleed. close. close. again. again. ignore. ignore.
ignore. sing. sing. sing. sing. louder. louder. louder. slower. slower. ignore.
ignore. embrace. breathe. breathe. bleed. bend. bend. bend. straighten.
straighten. ignore. ignore. pray. pray. pray. pray. pray. pray. pray. pray. pray. pray.
pray. sing. sing. sing. shout. sing. shout. sing. shout. sing. shout. pray. breathe.
breathe. breathe. breathe. breathe. swallow. swallow. swallow. swallow. sleep.
sleep. sleep. sleep. sleep. sleep. cough. bleed. cough. cough. cough. bleed.
bend. straighten. breathe. breathe. breathe. breathe. cough. bleed. straighten.
close. breathe. slower. hum. hum. hum. hum. look. feel. feel. feel. smell. smell.
smell. gag. gag. gag. gag. gag. breathe. ignore. ignore. hum. straighten. hum.
breathe. slower. slower. slower.

Iron and steel
Iron and steel

Tenements with bad roofs
Leaking rain
Slumped over in humidity

Hustle how you can
Rent's due man.
Get yours.
This is America.

We love a good funeral.
Black folks I mean.
Cuz we knew it was coming.
Soon as a boy is born
We get ready for his return
To the earth
To god if you believe in Him, that is.
Got the casket picked
'Fore he starts preschool.

Y'all did this.
(You won't like hearing it.)

No matter.
I gave up trying to explain.
This ain't that.
This is a requiem
A birdsong anyhow.

See Ashton there?
A constituency of court dates and
Hard choices
Pockets swollen with dollar store
Receipts, blunt wraps,
And the gun y'all say he
Was reaching for...?

That's a black man for you.
ALWAYS reaching.
And dying because of it.
Or the lie that he was...

When maybe he was just human.
Maybe he couldn't bend the way
You wanted him to.

Maybe he couldn't let go of
Being a man just cuz you say so.
Maybe his daddy's voice is
Louder than yours
Even when you say
Freeze
Put your hands up
Get on the ground

What if these men know
They are men
Or maybe it's...
These boys need you
To let em be boys
Ones who like toy guns and
Pretend.
Like Tamir
He was 12 when y'all took him
But that's another story
About the same thing

Alton is dying
Tradition found him
The ordinary ferocity of
Iron and steel
Rattling bone
Hurrying blood

A man
Vanishing
Before our very eyes

Red shirt wet with his leaving
Left arm trembling upwards
Like he's shaking his
Fist at God
One last curse
Or prayer
Same difference

We die bad
And often
And y'all say...

He must've had it comin...
Police have always been good...
To me.

Philando Castile's Name is so Beautiful I Remember Love Making

You are no longer as beautiful
as you once were, neither am I
it is a symptom of longing
or losing — to lose your hair
or fill out in the wrong places

We lost the small window
of time where both our bodies
could've been naked in bed
petitioning poetry to save us
& now all we have is the starkness
of black & brown bodies lying
everywhere on road sides,
in the car, outside the bodega,
near the docks at midnight.

When I first heard his name
I remember thinking —
Philando Castile, he's a prince
or a god, or just a man riding in his car
with child & love in tow. Or a moan
in my mouth, or just the spider
in Nikki Giovanni's poem. Or just
the beast in every white man's
imagination, with horns & teeth
& a gun for a hand —

& here I am, tracing my lips
with my fingers, this tool
I've inherited that can purse
& suck equally. In this dead
world full of the dying I no longer
care about losing my dress or my
heart. I only care about revolution
& the ugly business of revenge.
Between the knife handle & it's blade,
that is the only home I know
that gives true pleasure —

the body-toys of a thieving people.

If death by badgeism
is not de-Americanized.

My brown son's head
might be stuffed, hung
on a police station wall
like a fleshy night sky.

As in,
Moose
Negro,
Elk
Negro
Deer
Negro.

—Title Taken from Langston Hughes poem: A New Song

Killin' Spree

If they should succeed at killin' me:

- 1 - do not write a poem, instead write to change the legislation
- 2 - do not write a status to prove you are a "real activist,"
do not use my blood to write poems about your activism
-- use my blood to stain the schools & their memory w/the freedom
we refuse to live without.
- 4 - pick up a brick, a bat
-- something to protect my child(ren).
- 5 - do not police my children's language, let them curse when they weep
for me.
- 6 - do not tell them to stand taller than their prayers allow them, let
them heal until the sun says
"yes"
- 7 - pick up a book -- start a revolution.
revolution(s) includes (because many revolutions can occur):

Or;

- 1 - plan a march.
- 2 - please do not sale t-shirts.
- 3 - please do not ask my daughter(s) to sing over my ashes.
- 4 - please do not ask my sisters to poem & pray over my ashes.

Instead

start a scholarship fund.
give books to schools in my name.
fight the erasure of silence through sound.

Do not: just make a hashtag

- make a plan to organize for young girls empowerment sessions & self
care groups.

Do not: just make a hashtag

- join organizations that been out here -- fighting for our kind of
freedom.

do not forget i was always mean before i was mother,
i was always a bitch before i was a friend.
do not forget
i loved you.

wail

silence, as deadly as the pistol.
the women understand this.
we cry loudly.
without fear.
with fear.
death is coming.

we will not lie down.
not the way white men expect us to.

will not walk with heads down.
not the way white men expect us to.

single file. plastered. shackle-less ankles.

still
quiet,
is the loudest gun.

cannon for the acquitted.

the women do not ask questions.
the women burn the station.
hand out the gas mask.
hold out our hands for slaughter.
the women have teeth and bible verses.
the women can not be intimidated.

no, we can not be intimidated.

us, a harmony of war songs.
we wake up, screaming.
a breast full of hallelujah.
the women are coming,

Murder.

and we insist on hearing you wail.

Steven Willis

Dylann

Nice try Dylann
but We still going to church
Still gone claim this white man's religion
once used to enslave us
Still gone fill these white pews
with this black plight
Still gone hallelujah
Still gone be a nigga
Still gone come as we are
In sunday's best casket ready
I said We still gone be a nigga
We still gone lift every voice and sing
and lock hands like chains linked at benediction
still gone tith our ten percent
still gone bible study
still gone communion
still gone shout and praise and tongue

I know why you chose here Dylann
the church
has always been the womb for black revolution
A breeding ground for resistance
the source of
our faith
our hope
our tenacity
our strength
but Dylann
We are a favored people
and if bombing our basements couldn't stop us
if assassinating our leaders couldn't stop us
if burning crosses on our front lawns couldn't stop us
how could you?
with spontaneous rage
did you forget we are children of God
and who doesn't love unexpected trips home

So nice try Dylann
but We still going to church
Still gone pray with these blood stained bibles
knowing that Jesus's words should be the only ones stained in red

We still going to Church
still gone cast down your race war
and curse your prosperous weapon

We still going to Church
Still gone maintain our character
our Christ like countenance

We still going to church
Even if only in hopes you find your healing

We still going to church
Even if only to pray God has mercy on your soul

We still going to church
Even if only to learn how to forgive you
Even though our hearts are heavy
Even though our infirmities plague our souls
Even though we are in need of rest

We still going to church
We still going to church
We still going to church
We still
going

The Image

And they say God is always forgiving
 God of another chance
 An everlasting God
 A God that never quits
 If my people who are called by my name would humble themselves
 And keep on keeping
 Humble
 One glad morning
 We gone overcome
 But for now pain will endure for the night
 The Devil's gonna ride by in the night
 And set your front lawn on fire
 Set the church on fire
 Set the children on fire
 And ain't no telling when the morning's gonna come
 When the sun is gonna shine
 But for now we's gone be the light
 We's gone be the ones made in the image
 We gone keep on forgiving
 And turning the other cheek
 And we ain't never gonna run out of cheeks to turn
 We ain't never gonna hit back
 We gone just keep offering our bodies as communion
 To eat of our flesh
 And drink of our blood
 We gonna die
 so that others might live
 We gonna be like God
 Cause we was made in the image
 We gonna keep on forgiving
 And we gone pray at night
 Real hard
 That one day
 God gets tired
 So we can admit we are too
 So we can be a little less righteous
 A little less covered in the word
 You ever think maybe God got tired
 of handing out second chances so he sent us down to do it for him?
 You ever wanna just forfeit your home in glory
 Ain't you tired of marching
 You ever just wanna die on your own terms
 in your home
 in your own bed
 instead of getting shot down on your way there
 You ever think maybe God gets tired of being God?

DSM

“And so poetry is not a shopping list ...”

June Jordan

“The next time you begin
 to question your existence
 Remember
 Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt
 was a Black Teenager.”

Audre Lorde [from her archives]

Instructions: tread lightly on poetic flourish. follow June's instruction: say the accurate thing. interdict the suicide, no casual disquisition. prepare for how doing so you come head to head with expendability. wasting (of) this body is both aim and afterthought. also: you may choose to not prepare. (you may) choose to write a poem and then make dinner and then make love solitary into your own hand. or a living body, your choice, also must choose you, who/which will touch you into forgetting-remembering. (it's ok if our) spirits bear witness as we choose, whisper their fears, slip their fingers into ours, etc. it's (not) your fault if nobody listens. (it is your fault if) nobody listens. choose bc we must practice exercising the limited choices available: muscle strengthening for when we are free. we will be free. relinquishing our imaginative power is the central defeat, undoes this evolutionary project; we are not more safe if we police ourselves. *Better to speak, remembering*—you know, by now, the rest.

i am concerned about white delusion.

i was raised for years in the thickest shadows of a (light immigrant mixed etc etc we understand Caribbean colonialism & her requisite abuses, plus diaspora-induced schizophrenic) Black man as he is rooted who saw phantoms, etc. crazy is an inaccurate moniker & so/because it stilts understanding: understanding is an imaginative act. imagine, please: schizophrenia does not distort reality. to say so presumes an objective reality, against which, our ghosts, once living murdered, ripped from our solitary and familial hands, caution us, their/our teeth in the wind: ____ [in which we invoke her last words, or his last words, or all the words of each of our murdered, a cacophony or symphony, uttered in excruciating clarity, each a bomb, etched into viral memory & which i will not objectify here: let us rest our dead even as we tell/hold tight and do not ever forget their names]. objective reality is a trap made for and by white delusion.

i see a connection between the immigration-induced schizophrenia of my father & how completely he saw, no ragged edges in his universe, a blend of sense, a series of sensical thoughts stuttered out fearfully: the government is watching (it is) god appeared to me in a dream (okay). yet: his is another reality. far out on the bandwidth of acceptable.

in which the sufferer is afraid, stuttered afraid therefore capable of executing tremendous horror: for lack of seeing. in the case of my father, i mean. and

so: in the case of whiteness. i mean, whiteness as a schism, a schizophrenic induction, a psychotic disorder, a psychotic disorder, a conduction of principal elements away from desired, a mind (like my father's) believing itself well when it is not well.

in which i try to say this differently, swap in another lens: think about the dinosaurs how the Earth imagined dinosaurs and also us and everything else, we are simply the dream of our home body Earth, who creates and creates and creates as if she merely be the galaxy's smallest sister with ribbons in her hair, Celie as a child as seen and loved by us: how each of the planets occupy their orbits solely so that we may breathe and exist and be, not from generosity (in which there exists a distance between giver and receiver), but part-of, at perfect magnetic and gravitational distance (i.e., ask mars: is there life on mars? and mars will respond: yes on earth there is life on mars).

how the moon pulls/slings tide forth in my body and this blood is blood everywhere and how our bodies refuse to stop singing despite despite despite.

white delusion (file under psychosis) belongs: in the DSM the diagnostic and statistical manual of mental Disorders, that thing whiteness made or influenced, lockstep and madness, categorizations, medical trials, etc. may we be permitted to imagine: a drug to transform the root of affliction? a burning thing kept for centuries crossing seas? lock her in your heart. white is our mothers too: hold tight to while resist and refuse. keep them safe from themselves: keep them safe. hold white delusion in a padded cell. medicate white delusion with its antithesis. i remember what they did to my father: revolution stripped land. (fidel is a white man too, raised wealthy, trying perhaps but did not extricate and burn the root of madness within: i hold no parlay with fools. i will not limit this imaginative consequence.) my father: embargo stripped mobility. *his fat, pill-studded eyes*; those rooms, painted green, fat on vending machine waste. imagine the antidote: what do you imagine?

*fragment of proposed screening tool for white delusional psychosis
a found poem / real questions from real screenings:*

y/n i see or hear things [other] do not see or hear

y/n share absolutely nothing in common with [other]

y/n i believe in more than one thing about reality and the world around me that [other] does not seem to believe in

y/n [other] does not believe me when i tell them what i see and hear

y/n i have magical powers that nobody [other] has or can explain

y/n [other] are plotting to get me

y/n i am treated unfairly because [other] are jealous of my special abilities

y/n [other] have told me what i say is incoherent

y/n i believe that [other] may be planning to cause me harm, or may be about to cause me harm in the near future

y/n i sometimes feel completely unresponsive emotionally as if i don't feel anything

y/n something i experience or perceive may be real or may only be a part of my imagination or my dreams

y/n i am haunted

y/n i frequently blame [other] for what happen(ed/s)

y/n excessively vigilant(e) tense on guard or jumpy

y/n trouble focusing concentrating or remembering things

y/n unable to feel love: trouble connecting with [other]

y/n i involve self in things that in hindsight could have had negative consequences

y/n i try to cut down but ended up using it more or for longer than i intended

y/n i experience cravings or withdrawal symptoms when i wasn't using [it] (read: in the metaphorical body: sweating, increased pulse rate, digestive problems, tremors, hallucinations, anxiety, headache, fatigue/ drowsiness, sleep problems, appetite or weight changes, restlessness, depression, irritability, concentration problems, muscle pain, fever, etc.)

y/n i spend a lot of time covering up my use, and planning ahead to make sure i would have enough to get me through the day

y/n use in situations in which [it] was physically dangerous or risky to do so

y/n i had to take [the substance] in increasing amounts in order to achieve the effect that i wanted

How to Score

total y: _____
 total n: _____
 identify the root
 memorize the root
 extricate the root
 burn it

...resisting our own evolution even as this literal galaxy we inhabit without imaginative consequence is pulling for us, singing us blue and boned into existence. Daily.

(do you know when i was in cuba as a child child young one not as young as Earth but you know i learned my family wa/i/s Black like Black i knew but i didnt know bc latinx try and assimilate whiten up get blanched up like beans try + forget i think: what root of this in me i extricate and see clearly to recognize & root out. then burn)

Conclusion: extricate root out and burn
 (we all come from a burning people)

Fuck Your DSM. Fuck white madness. Root out. Root.

Conclusion: in which another poet said Black Joy & our orbited ghostridden galaxy stone home sings back Yes. In which we sing our restless dead with *our* clear-seeing lullaby mouths. A moon a tide within. *Ours*. In which we hold the murdered children and murdered women and murdered men, all names picked safe and protected in mouths under *tongues*. *All*. In which (possessive) living sings undistorted in our memory which will not be washed away be it sea or politic that come for us. Neither by burn, by root, or by madness.

I am of the Diaspora, my body is built of stars and insufficiently mapped:

Elegy disquietude:

I am a Black Poet who will not remain silent while this nation murders Black People

the first time

i hated a cop
 he was mouthing off his tongue
 to my brother about how he ought
 to show him some respect
 carrying on and whatnot
 as if my brother didn't have
 a little sister watching
 who looked up to him
 like moonlight and stars
 on humid nights
 those days he lead and I followed
 and he kept on
 like my brother wasn't
 a sky scraper or something
 like he wasn't
 the bridge that led to boroughs
 like he wasn't
 my hero
 like he wasn't
 the grandson of a union worker
 who died building a water tunnel
 for a coupla knucklehead kids
 trying to turn fire hydrants into car washes
 i saw how brown and black boys grow
 into themselves angry at the world
 that day no matter what
 a sister did to show her love
 she couldn't make a boy no man
 he wasn't bent on becoming
 and even when I thought I was fighting him
 i was fighting them
 we were always fighting them
 all those people out their fighting us
 doing everything to remind us
 of our place,
 and i couldn't undo
 all the hate that builds

The rain relents, falls
the ants retreat
like an unstrung rosary
my son sits on his portion

of porch, curses
his feet, curses me,
curses the dead
ants he can't bring back

brown girl after *Angel Nafis*

brown girl, body
brown girl, objectified
brown girl, a night's throat
brown girl, night
brown girl, brown
brown girl, drowning
brown girl, can't swim
brown girl, an ocean
brown girl thinks she's ceiling
brown girl can't remember the last time someone called her sky
brown girl, shore
washed

laid

dry
brown girl, disposed
brown girl, disposed of
brown girl, brown
always brown

a
l
w
a
y
s

brown girl, flailing
brown girl, black too
brown girl, brown- black
brown girl, colonized
brown girl, raped
brown girl, light now
brown girl, still
still, brown - black
still brown

a
l
w
a
y
s

brown girl, blossom
brown girl
brown woman now
brown woman knows the way language bends
the way words claim

to claim me woman and not speak of the skin that makes me
is to walk with privilege I do not own

check it, ignore my father's face, irresponsible
my grandmother's hands be a road map to everywhere
this brown is no rude stain
this is what makes me fortress
what makes me lighthouse

we aint burning
we're surviving a world set ablaze

check it, we mad beautiful, ya'll

When My Daughter Wasn't Assaulted

She shook with fear, *or was it guilt*,
 at the officer's unraised hand and smile.
 How she leaned away, slowly, when he called
 a tow truck instead of backup.
 How her tears fled when he showed mercy
 over rage for the couple on the side of the highway,
 flat tire wasted against asphalt. She couldn't help
 but look at her white boyfriend pacing
 along this strip of road and wonder, what if
 this was a different part of Texas?
 What if this hero was a different shade of power?
 Would she be so lucky, *or was it luck*,
 if the absence of a known pain
 is just a heavy hand in repose?

WHEN INVITED TO DISCUSS RICHARD PRYOR + DOGGEREL POETRY

after a conversation about Gertrude Stein

P A R T I

First, understand Richard Pryor, might not even be
 Richard Pryor. Richard Pryor
 might be an excuse to reduce black tongue
 into circus trick: watch black America Creole for survival. Watch
 Creole for survival be a tear cried in a laugh. America
 tried to kill Richard Pryor more times than Richard
 Pryor has tried to kill Richard Pryor. Before
 we talk about the punch lines
 we need to talk about the set up: the Peoria brothel
 where grandson watched grandmother pimp mother like business
 as usual. Before we talk about the mix, act-out, and callback
 we need to talk about his dogfight for his own life
 and how he wasn't never no dog in the first place. How was he ever
 supposed to win? When I say win
 I mean survive. When I say survive, I mean: fall asleep and wake up
 without being haunted. When I say haunted
 I mean post-traumatic stress looks like a stand up comedian
 bent over enough freebase to set himself on fire. Imagine
 his burning body, the funniest thing a room full of strangers has ever seen. Imagine
 their laughter, his only escape from being born
 on the wrong side of a Max Julian movie. Richard
 Pryor had to be Hollywood, sound Peoria, and not die
 from the smoke inhalation. He did
 two out of three. Colleges want to talk about how funny he was
 instead of why he was as funny as he was. Instead of why
 we though he was as funny as he was.

PART II

Doggerel: poetry that is poorly written
and that often is not meant to be taken seriously.

Webster Dictionary

root word: dog.

isn't that how misappropriation works?

Cage a bunch of people in a kennel, call it white supremacy or
patriarchy. Doesn't that sound patriotic? Doesn't that
sound like standard England oppressed down throats? Sounds
like broken English returned and laughed at until it becomes trendy.
Sounds like a colonizer wearing a shark tooth necklace
made out of stolen trachea.

PART III

Conversations about black culture become trapdoor
conversations about "The N-Word" and public domain. You know this
because you know racism is tricky, is vicious, is an ambush full of people
watching you watch Richard Pryor, so they can know when to laugh without
you smelling the burning cross from across the room.

POEM RESISTING ARREST

This poem is guilty. It assumed it retained
the right to ask its question after the page

came up flush against its face. The purpose
this poem serves is obvious, even to this poem,

and that cannot stop the pen or the fist
choking it. How the page tastes at times—plain

powerlessness in this poem's dark mouth, a blend
of that and what it has inhaled of the news. It spits

blood—inking. It is its own doing and undoing.
This poem is trying it hold itself together. It has

the right to remain either bruised or silent,
but it is a poem, so it hears *you'd be safer if you*

stopped acting like a poem, stopped resisting.
Where is the daylight (this poem asks and is

thus broken) between existence and resistance,
between the now bloodied page and the poem?

Another poem will record the arrest of this poem,
decide what to excerpt. That poem will fail—

it won't find the right metaphor for emoting
the pain of having to lift epigraphs from the last

words of poems that were accused of resisting.
That poem is numb. This poem is becoming

numb, already losing feeling in its cuffed limbs.
No one will remember the nothing of which

this poem was accused—just that it was another
poem that bled. This poem never expected to be

this poem, yet it must be—for you who refuses
to acknowledge the question that this poem knew

it was dangerous to ask.

Sweetback

When Chris Dorner trained his gun
on the LAPD, when he released a manifesto addressed

To: America
Subject: Last Resort

we knew it was clearly a suicide note.

I take no joy in the blood on his hands
nor his burnt body
but it comes as no great shock
in the throes of PTSD
that some policemen
look like overseers
even now.

So, yes. When he quoted D.H. Lawrence,
“I never saw a wild thing feel sorry for itself,”
when he said that he had exhausted
all other options,
I wanted to tell him to run;

not because he was innocent,
but even the foreshadow of defeat
is enough to awaken the adrenaline
when your bones remember the burning.

I wanted to tell him to run;
not for himself,
nor his own iron hands

but for Fred Hampton
and Malcolm X
and Martin Luther King, Jr.
and Amadou Diallo
and Troy Davis
and Trayvon Martin
and Paul Childs
and Ramarley Graham
and Sean Bell
and Oscar Grant
and Rekia Boyd
and Timothy Stansbury
and Orlando Barlow
and Aaron Campbell
and Victor Steen

and Steven Washington
and Alonzo Ashley
and Wendell Allen
and Aiyana Jones
and Ronald Madison
and Marvin Booker
and James Brissette
and John Crawford III
and Eric Garner
and Barbara Dawson
and Mike Brown
and Tamir Rice
and Walter Scott
and Cameron Tillman
and Eric Harris
and Sandra Bland
and Alton Sterling
and Philando Castile
and Alva Braziel

and so many more names
that I will never know

and I did not know
any of these people

but damned if they couldn't all been my family

and I know they say it's not a war
but damned if I don't feel like an insurgent sometimes

and no, I have never killed anyone,
but have long since admitted
that I could.

I mean, America, you got big guns.
I ain't scared though, not with this working womb.

America, you thought the
Black Panther Free Breakfast Program was scary,
you ain't met me yet.

I mean, we've been through a lot, America.
I think that now,
now, for every one of our children
you allow to be murdered,
I will make two.

With brothas gully as they come.
All grit and swagger and knuckle and earth and gleam, beards all unapologizing.

Brothas who won't smile at you.
Brothas who ain't never been afraid of you.
Brothas who smell just like the sun.

We will raise our babies together,
like militia, ticking.
We will detonate them on your college campuses,
at your job, in your neighborhood.
We will suck up all the financial aid.
We will teach Fred Hampton in the classrooms
until his blood can stop screaming.

You don't want it with we, America.
We, Black mothers,
are angry as ever,
are fertile as ever,
and unafraid
of our children.

I'm not leaving, America.

We will take over the schools and
send your daughters home smiling
like Patty Hearst, America.

You feeling me now?
You fearing me now?

I might even have your babies, America.
They will be Black, too.

America, this is a war.
America, I will send my sons to all your corners.
You will be needing their light.

America, this is no manifesto. This is a love poem.
Making love is the only way I know
how to save you.

Your hatred and fear are a cancer.
Your teeth are rotting from your head.

America, now is the time
to call on whatever God you pray to.
Give thanks for my brilliant sons.

Yes, there will be sons, Black sons.
We will call them all Jamal and Rakim
and we will love them. We will love them.

We're not dying, America.
We will live forever.

Bios

Aja Monet Bacquie currently lives in little haiti, miami listening to Kodak Black's "Skrt", where she merges poetry arts & political education in community organizing with Smoke Signals Studio, Community Justice Project & Dream Defenders.

Yaya Bey is a poet, singer and collagist from Queens, NY. Her favorite song of resistance is "Fuck the police" by lil Boosie.

Mahogany L. Browne sips coffee constantly on the planet of Brooklyn, while listening to James Brown's "I'm Black & I'm Proud" on repeat...

Dominique Christina listens to Stevie Wonder's *Songs in the Key of Life* album while indulging her vices and parenting her children in Colorado.

Kyle Dargan catches hype in Benning Heights, D.C.--frequently bumping "I Will Not Apologize" by The ROOTS.

Jennifer Falú slays and ministers in Brooklyn while Praise dancing to Bob Marley's "Black Man Redemption".

Rico Frederick resides in Brklyn, listens to Black Stalin's "Burn Dem" with a cup of chai tea & gummy bears to keep him company.

Luther Hughes listens to Kendrick Lamar's "Alright," while eating chocolate cookies in his St. Louis apartment.

Jive Poetic be in Brooklyn banging that "Anytime" by Bounty Killer, while he drinks sorrel and waits from the dollar van.

Amanda Johnston can be found in Central Texas teaching and writing to the beat of "Malcolm Garvey Huey" by Dead Prez.

Steven Leyva bends ears in north Baltimore, while Ben Harper's "Better Way (War Mix)" blazes the speakers.

Venessa Marco dances a mean Guaguanco en Los Washington Heights inspired mostly by Celia Cruz's "Carnival".

Yesenia Montilla resides in the land of Harlem. She writes her best poems while her boss is in meetings & anything Marley is playing in the background.

Christina Olivares daydreams furiously in her fine borough of the Bronx while Celia Cruz' Quimbara sonics teleports and transcends her (to) (all her) home(s).

Suzi Q. Smith lives and writes in Denver while she stays singing James Weldon Johnson's "Lift Ev'ry Voice", "Liberation" by Outkast, and her own "Sleeping Giant."

Steven Willis plots on the Universe from his Bushwhack apartment while Marvin Gay sings of "Inner City Blues".

Black Poets Speak Out Statement

In light of the continuous murders of black people across the nation, Black poets across the country are sharing video responses in solidarity with those who refuse to accept these atrocities as a normal condition of black life. We are using the force of our art to transform policy. We can no longer settle for incremental adjustments. We are calling for an absolute transformation. We will not be done until we see justice for the murder of black people. For more interview requests, poetic submissions and collaboration inquiries please email: blackpoetspeakout@gmail.com.

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