

a Poem for Melba Pattillo,  
the Little Rock Nine,  
and A Mother Who Lost Her Son

*James Davis III*

They say that warriors don't cry  
but that's a damn lie.  
I've seen the mightiest succumb  
to the death of a song.  
I've seen the strong fall  
at the stroke of a tongue.  
Warriors cry  
when their hearts have been pierced  
by the deep rhythms of life.  
Suffering and living  
have beats of their own.  
Eyes leak when the sun sets at dawn  
And rises in the west.  
The moisture of a single tear  
the irrigation of a soul in limbo.  
Unsettled by the unsettling currents  
of the breath of time.  
In and out the maw  
of what nightmares leave behind.  
A desolate view of relief from the side.  
Potential broken across the back of reality.  
So warriors cry  
for the loss of a moment.  
The moment before the moment  
they stopped being a warrior  
for a moment.  
That moment frozen in pitiless silence.  
A silence which screams  
for a moment of silence.  
For just one moment to stand  
without the whirlwind of future memories  
forever laid to rest.  
The whirlwind created  
by the new hole you call home,  
named nothingness,

on a street called what comes next,  
in a town with nothing left.  
So when warriors cry  
the world takes notice:  
The best have come to join us  
before they once again rise above us  
to a height just on the horizon  
where they inspire us to aspire.  
So when warriors cry  
We forgive them.  
More than forgive  
we give them all that we can give them.  
When warriors cry  
We're all reminded  
that we're human.