

DYING GRIOTS SPEAK OF US



FALL 2002

A STUDENT PUBLICATION

Letter From the Editors

Throughout the breadth of the Diaspora, griots were the storytellers of their people. They were the gatekeepers of history as well as their communities' conscience. The griots spoke of their people, of their hopes, and of their dreams—they spoke of us. In this day and age, we still speak our fallible truths, allow our suffering to speech, as Cornel West would have us, and, with our words, shine light on what people refuse to see. However, we have moved one step beyond our storyteller ancestors and we have evolved into something more. We have come to know the full power of our words and we have come to know that we, through the power of our voices, can move heaven and earth. This power, as well as our recognition of it, has made us into the transforming spirit. We no longer just tell the story...we are the story.

Through telling of the families we come from, the people we love, the lands, within and without, that we have seen, the poems we write, and the colors we put to the palette, this newest incarnation of the deep and rich Onyx legacy is a testament to the fact that we are the story. This story has endured through Rohit Reddy, Ellen Wheeler, Natasha Marin, Rachel McPherson, Lauren Allen, Adisa Bridgewater, Alwin Jones, Ajahne Santa Anna, Jamila Moore, Chinua Thelwell, Candace Gomez, Meghan Brown, Candice Mosley, Rochelle Williams, and this story will endure as long as any of us still have voice left.

Sincerely,
Chike Aguh
Co-Editor&Chief

Sincerely,
Lucretia Hoffman
Co-Editor&Chief

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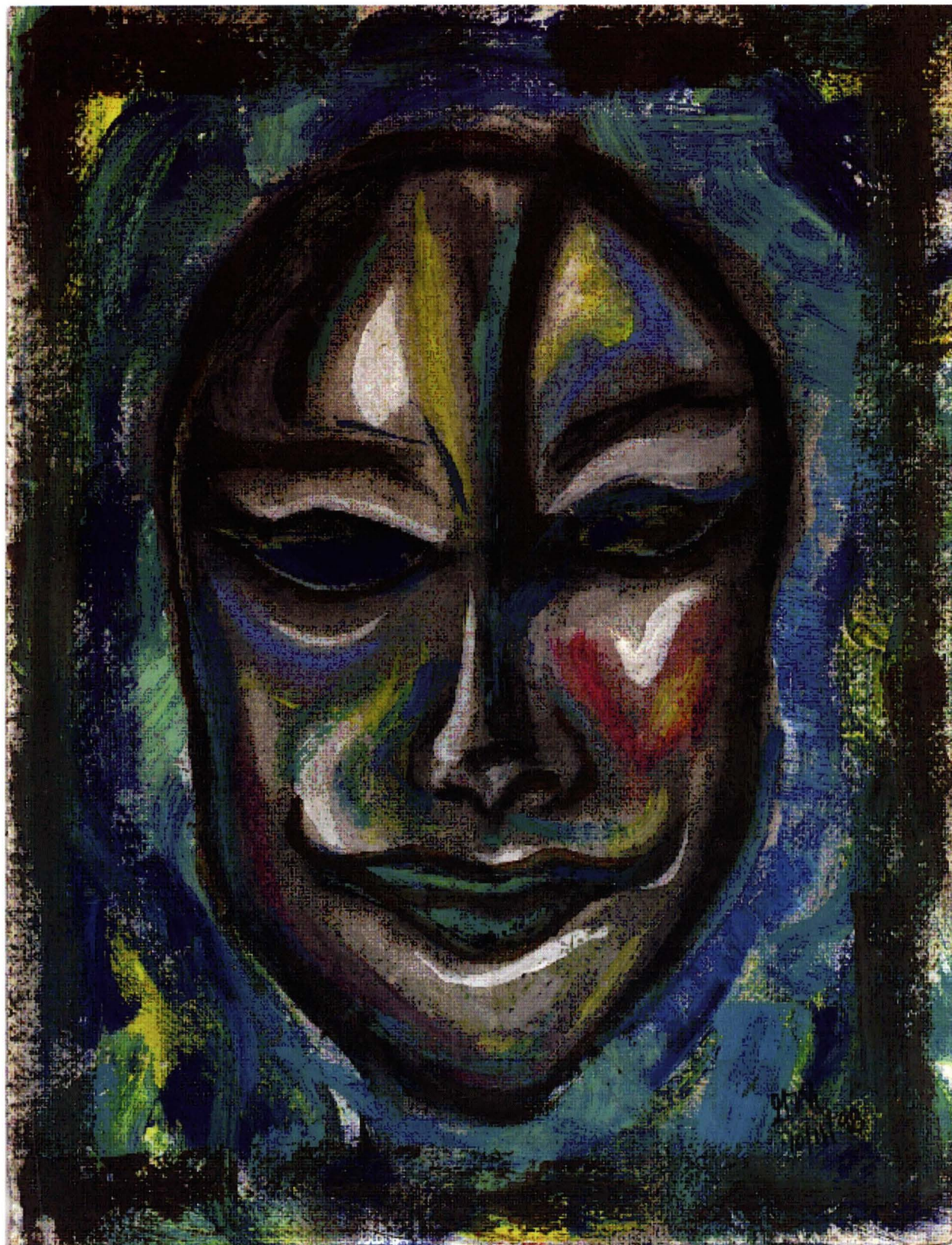
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Literary Selection Committee~

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Untitled

-Glenda Molina

Colors

These frequencies frequently blind us.
Not from the colors they give off,
but the underlying structures they've created.

We're not color blind.
We see individual colors.
Each different.
All beautiful.
But we fail to see the mosaic they comprise.
We're so quick to generalize and categorize,
surprised to find the real prize being unattainable.
Yet it rests before our very eyes.

I'm an enigma.
I transcend the colored paradigm.
I'm not yellow.
I'm not white.
I'm a little bit bronze with a red undertone.
I've never seen that box though.

But colors are beautiful.
They're descriptive.
They have histories.
Provide comfort for citizenry,
medicine for misery,
inspiration for chivalry.
At your service your majesty.
Colors...

Colors can plague our psyche,
disconnect us from reality,
teach us historical fallacies.
Discrimination passes casually.
Conflict escalates gradually,
amidst cases of colored battery.
Flag waving during tragedy,
render us "casualties of abnormal normality."

When will we see?

When will we see more than primary colors.
Red and blue make purple.
Blue and yellow make green.
Yellow and red make orange.
But black and white don't make brown.

You see?
These colors can be quite arbitrary.
Should we paint brush strokes of invisibility,
or perpetuate skewed visionary?
This paradox speaks to me.

It tells me about a revolution of colors.
It tells me I am the revolution.
And no, I will not be televised.
The revolution will not be televised for my dreaming eyes.
The revolution will not integrate all the colors on the spectrum.
The revolution will not put an end to colored conflict.
The revolution will not melt all the color of our flags into one.
The revolution is not an end all solution.

Rather, this revolution can help us see clearly
a system of colors and its tainted legacies.
A system that penetrates our mind, our emotions, our institutions,
eliciting pain, suffering oppression confusion.
This revolution, with any luck, lets humanity realize
these colors still fuck us up.

-Andrew Hara

Untitled

Train hopping, brain spotting. I'm circling the world in my mind: thinking, dreaming, praying.
The topic isn't clear, the reason vague and damn I gotta take a shit so I can't concentrate.
Isn't that the way it always is? Biological functions taking the place of dare I say it, the real shit.
Look outside your window fool. War torn, babies born to dirt and grime and drugs.
I go to sleep thanking God for my life and praying for the end of this world.
No, hypocrisy is not in my vocabulary.
Certain ideas don't exist in my world of despair and tiredness.
Tired of a positive attitude in a negative atmosphere.
Tired of the bombing.
Body parts are flying at me. I dodge.
I'm Evander Holyfield in a 10 round match.
Right jab, left hook, duck and move body. Yeah, that's how you do it.
My fist is my mind, and my opponent the world.
Yet, I'm losing this battle.
3rd round knockout because I choose to close my mind to this sick twisted world.
I am an intelligent, talented young black woman, yet I close my mind.
Remember, hypocrisy does not exist in my vocabulary.

-Ola J. Friday

A Trip to the Bathroom

Not wanting to
Play bare-chested
Dorm stripper
I peel back layers of cloth
In my drawer.
I choose a shirt like rolling dice.

I slide my toes
Through the archly strap
Of my flip-flops,
A firewall between
My fleshy soles and the greenery
Growing on tiled floors.

While my mouth fills with foam
I admire the "ban nike"
Tee-shirt that I am wearing.
The one with pictures of sweatshop
Furnaces filled with hell fire.

As I make my way
To the door
I look down to see
The nike checkmarks.
The lopsided grins
Engraved in my flip-flops.

I pass students in the hallway.
 I wonder if they can see the cardboard sign
 I am carrying. The one with big block letters
 Petitioning for animal rights.
 I wonder if they can see the fur coat I am wearing.

It feels as if I'm walking on the
Leathery palms of children.

-Chinua Thelwell

Cyclical

Misread faces
Under read pages

Home-brewed anger
New faces

Chippawas and Navajos
Replaced by
Hail Mary's and rosaries
Replaced by

Chileans and Rosemarys
Replaced by

Luigis and Donatellas

Replaced by

Elis and Sarahs

Replaced by

Jamals and Keishas
(of the former Henrys and Ethels)
co-habiting spaces with

Joses and Marias

Whose boat outraced

Ming Lees and Sangyoons

Substituted now by

Lach Allahs and Muhammeds

Hate in cycles competing with the moon

Recycled and renamed

Always a victim

Accompanied by a claim .

-Kristin J. Hooper

Seeing the Absentees of History

Since we've been little
We've been taught history
A field of study from which many are absentee
Except in the parts pertaining to slavery
Or railroads built by Andrew Carnegie
Or migrant workers slaving under branch and tree
Or where someone tries to scientifically prove CPT
Or empirically prove tenure better than me
This flawed history has stolen our ability to see
And for how long have we been walking around
Walking with sight so tightly bound
The blind leading the blind
All in a quest to find
Who we really are
We are the million men who marched on Washington
We are the owners of the ears set afire by the words of
Malcolm
And the mind inspired by the dreams of Martin
We are the hearts that bled when brother Medgar was taken
from us
And sister Assata was driven from our midst
We are the bearer's of Cesar Chavez's standard
Screaming La Causa
And we are what moved Che and his comrades
Through the hulls of Cuba
We are the broken backs of Chinese
Who worked and died on the railroads
We are the hopes of the Japanese
Who were interned just for being who they were
We are the reason that innocent Arabs
And Israelis pray not to die by a suicide bomb or a stray bullet
We are the ones who have been eating the crumbs and scraps
Of the rotting American Pie
And Goddamnit now
We want some watermelon, chicken and grits
We no longer will accept being absentees of history
We will no longer accept that our history starts with the
Middle Passage
Or the arrival of the Conquistadors
Or when Marco Polo first set foot on our shores
Or at the outset of the Six-Day War
Our place in history amounts to more
And we will make that point
Even if we gotta bang down Christopher Columbus' door

-Chike Aguh

Welcome to the Congo

My beloved Congo,
The joke of the continent
The world's gold, diamond and coltan mine
Rwanda's concubine
This country of mine,
Poisoned with the swine that is US policy
Westerners and Asians exploit the riches but live behind gated communities
With underpaid Congolese security
So they're closing the door on fractured Congolese faces with one hand,
While robbing her of her riches with the other and no province is safe
Because some of your own corrupted Congolese leaders are involved in this race
But even they can't even keep pace in the face of our Rwandan aggressors annexing our spirit to
their sickened,
stricken, sinister soul
To such an extent that to now call eastern Congo, you must dial Rwandan area codes
While they toy with the possibility of introducing Rwandan currency in the east
The United Nations talks of peace knowing full well that peace can only be attained through violence
Jean Pierre Bemba becoming the Congolese Prime Minister can only happen through violence
Child soldiers fighting in fear of retribution on their families, join in the spread of violence
Raping my mother country and spilling her black coltan blood only continues through VIOLENCE
But when I tell you about Congolese genocide with Western compliance
Your response...silence!
See, I know because I used to be just like you, sittin' there smilin' while other folks like dyin'
Even bought my wife to be a diamond and probably spilled the blood of a distant cousin for it
And choose to ignore it
But now I've visited Congolese refugee camps to find that there's not even any refuge for refugees
Abandoned Congolese mothers and children living in tents made out of empty rice bags
While lice drags through their hair and their daughters living in despair,
Start having babies at 12 years old with 50-year-old married men with no humility
Who pay them .25 for their virginity and the possibility of exchange for AIDS
While the World Bank gives this absentee father of a government aid
But I'm searching for a cure for both diseases because 4,000,000 have died in 4 years
And too many orphans are shedding tears as children start dying in the street at 11 yrs old
Because even though it's hot on the outside, their inner spirits are cold
From walking around starving in a capital city that barley has paved roads
And □ a meal a day can't heal that
Families living in less than \$1 a month can't heal that
And since you only see Israel, Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq on the news...y'all can't feel that
So I'm hoping that a thousand words can be worth a picture
'Cause this image of the Congo may not fit your stomach
But it'll fit your fingers with diamonds,
Your ears with gold,
Your cell phones with coltan,
While newly discovered Congolese oil heats your house when it's cold
But folks still don't give a damn
Even when I talk about Congolese with polio, walking as if their left knee was glued to their left hand
See there may be a cure for measles and malaria but there's no medicine for misery
In a country being steered in the wrong direction,
With children dying from all types of infection,
And 12-year-old girls condemned to death because rich men, don't use protection,
And all of their relationships end in rejection,
It's like the whole country's suffering from a lethal injection,

A second genocide is less than 100 years that's gone without mention,
Along with the fact that we've gone 12 years without an election,
On the Congolese street called the "Avenue of the Future",
That's where my father was tortured and nearly died in detention
So you'll have to forgive me when I say that our future looks bent in the eyes of the people
And I'm also pissed off because, they say "Vive le Congo independent", but I don't remember when it ever was
The international community correctly condemns Congolese corruption in questioning where the ministers bought their cars from
But the world's ears become deaf when I ask where our invaders got their arms from?
This is the Congo damn it, and ain't none of it funny
Americans who work here say it's a great place to make money
Fold with connections from Bush to Bin Laden steady robbin' this country of her resources through Lebanese liaisons
Living in the land of the internationally sanctioned genocide
While pathetic US + putrid UN policies = pesticide
Claiming that they've finally brokered peace but don't let them fool ya
Because up until this day we're still diggin' up body bags in Bunia
Because until their role in the Congo supports nothing but violence
Our continual purchase of Congolese riches that never benefit the masses - compliance
Possible experiments with untested AIDS drugs on unsuspecting Congolese - in the name of science
Poems like this to try to wake us all up - a simple act of defiance
All I'm asking for my beloved Congolese people - self-reliance
But when I ask you to help me in healing the hurting heart of Africa, your response...silence.

-Omekongo wa Dibinga



End of the Road

-Jamila Moore

The Miler

READY, I can't go back
SET, the only way is forward
GO, beneath me the ground flows
Away and I begin to run
Start line? No clue, where that was
Big Bang, human womb
Pool of ooze, 1492
I do not know but from whence I came
Come the voices of our ancestors
Whispering "do not forget us"
Finish line? Again no clue
Where the presses stop printing
The historical lexicons
When man drops
one-too-many bombs
And finds his line in the poem
Of the sands of time gone
I do not know, when I look ahead
To that far-off, misty place
I see the future's face
And I hear posterity crying out in the dark
"Make sure there is a world for us to live in"

I run and I run
My legs burning
With the heat of the brands
That scorched the numbers
Into the wrists
Of those unfortunate victims
Of Nazi concentration
I have run from the 5 pillars of Islam
To the four pillars of hip-hop
Which was at one time bebop
Before CEO's decided to co-opt
My feet have felt the sands
Of the Holy Land
Where Christians did demand
What they thought was theirs
And after all was dead and done
It didn't belong to anyone
Now did it?
I have run with white man
Hunting dark man with tempered steel
Capitalist out to slay poor man
With Wall Street deals
That clip minds
Of their wings
Of time
That threatens
To pass them by

On my brow collects
Dirt, dust, drops of sweat
or are those tears?
6 million tears
Shed over 400 years
Of being snatched by slave ships
Sailing into new world piers
Bet like corporate blue chips
For a winning hand of dreams very dear
Royally flushed down the hierarchy
Trickling down tier by tier
And my deepest fear
Is that I will run
From the dawn of time
To the Reaper's Chime
And still end up going nowhere
Stuck in cloudy days
Marijuana haze
Being a member of the masses
Running thru the maze
Of mis-aimed media praise
Headlines weaved thru wily ways
Somehow always coming back
To the brother in for an extended prisons stay

No, I will keep moving
Because if I stand still
Even for a moment
Father Time
will lace up his boots
and walk all over me
Like a doormat reading:
"Despair, Depression and
Depreciation of Self Live Here"
And I hear them
All the words ever uttered
And all the voices that well ever speak
Rising up from the salt of the earth
And sweeping about me in the winds of change
And they all say the same thing
RUN, YOUNG MAN, RUN
Who am I to argue?
Like a monk, I will drive my mind towards serenity
Like Saul, I will rise with the tide towards divinity
I am the Miler an I will run with the winds toward infinity

-Chike Aguh

Them Talented Niggas

Mind chasin'
And mind erasin'
Schemin' on the
Institutionally unaware.
To wear suits and drive
Benzes –

While Malik can't date their
Daughters, and Tashas not
Their sons. Displacing their
Color with rules that dislocate
Their ethnicity.

They don't hire Tyrik,
Cause they are higher,
and well,
What would Bob and Bill
Think of that?

They don't give back
To the community, they
Can't communicate, relate -
Cause a nigga is and always
Will be, but that nigga ain't them.

Building a white picket
Fence around their
white picked it
world.

Ivy league James
Is one in a million
Co-opressin a million.
Cause a nigga is and
Always will be, but that
Nigga ain't them.

-Kristin J. Hooper



Untitled

-Michael McCleod

Balibkayan Blues

Hot sticky air
rich with Tagalog phrases i once knew
in a past life.

i'm coming back, digging deep
for roots this new world spawn didn't know existed.

The islands were for me a distant memory,
a foggy dream created by imagination and formed by
dinner dishes, familial fables, and mom's foreign accent.

*I didn't know, didn't understand where you came from.
Where I came from.*

Brown faces- ones that belong to my aunts, uncles, cousins and mother,
ones that my society taught me to view as the "other,"
Ones that I seldom saw in positons of power,
(because where I'm from they are deemed inferior)
-here they are everywhere and are everything.
This world explains so many of my tendencies...

Those little things I thought were obsessive quirks of mom's
(things that only I knew about)
are the norm in this land I forgot existed.

Like the signaling with the pucker of lips and a whistful "doo-oon,"
or bathing using water conservitavely with bucket and *tabo*,
or the intonation of the name of your *anak*, just so, during heated conversations,
creating the mutual understanding that there's nothing stronger than the power of
Filipina mothers voice when she's mad.
It can sound as calm as a noon-time nap but feel as loud as a lion's roar.

*I didn't know, didn't understand where you came from.
Where I came from.*

Dilapidated walls, crumbling under five-hundred years of oppression.
first the Spanish,
with their christianity, aristocracy, racial hierarchy,
western mentality, expansionist sensibility
and emprialistic ideology.

then the Americans,
shouldering the white man's burden of educating their
poor, little, brown brothers...
using our islands as military outposts
and our women as sexual satisfactions.
Until they realized that granting territory status meant that their little brown brothers could
invade their country, take their jobs, and misceginate with their women.
so they set us
free.
We converted, assimilated, learnt the language of our emperialists.
their ideas, ideals permeated the living body of a country plagued by oppression.

We are a hybrid
Spanish syllables line native dialects
Mary virginal, their adopted mother and symbol of sanctity
creating a country obsessed with rosaries.
American educations and english universal.

*I like to be in Amerika!
O.K. by me in Amerika!
Ev'rything free in Amerika
For a small fee in Amerika! ***

Light skinned revered along with bridged noses and tall physiques.
Notions of superiority branded by centuries of colonialistic rule
where light is beautiful
where white is beautiful.

So me, the *mestiza*, is revered as a gem.
Epitomizing a wishful attainment of stature.
American
rich
American
free
American
white.
they stare, they glare, they awe, they paw,
and I realize that I do not come from this world,
nor ever could.

They want me as their mascot, their American amulet.
To parade daytime television sagas
quench pop. music fancies and porno flicks.
Because I'm filipina enough to belong to them,
but white enough to be better..

Mother, why didn't you tell me
that the source of your tears was
a country branded third world
and a people branded second class
and life's justice slashed
for being brown?

Cause now I cry because you washed your tears away
in the sweaty storm of struggle,
and left this homeland to my imagination.

*I didn't know, didn't understand where you came from.
Where I came from.*

This distant figment of my mind's eye I now realize as reality.
one that is more than a middle-class venture to exotica,
land of palm trees, warm breeze, spicy dishes, and tiki torches.
but rather, of my history.
I am the *anak*, the child of both this old world and the new.
A hybrid just like they are,
and a discoverer of indelible truths.

*Now I know. I understand
your enduring struggle,
your native soil of opulent culture yet that still sheds the tears of adversity.
Where you came from. Where I come from.*

-Lynda Turet

***from the song "America" in Westside Story*

holiday

Not now my love, no politics or schoolbooks, or questions about the race today.

Today, all I want to think about is how you-make-me-feel so good when you touch me in that way. Today I want laugh with you, and look at you with both eyes concentrated on the way your lips bend, and how your grin erupts volcanoes in me.

Today I want to be your best thing, and give you parts of me you haven't seen in weeks. I want to feel mountains lifted off my back with your kiss, and your touch on the small of my neck. Today I want to have you my love completely and fully, embodied in this thing called lovemaking. You said tomorrow yesterday, and tomorrow is today, and I can't wait because baby, I've got needs and well- you know I am for the cause, but can't today be a *holiday*? We can call it, Coretta Scott King Day, or Betty Shabazz Day, or Partner of the Revolution Day.

Just for today can you not be black man, just my man; and I not black woman, just your woman. And can we not worry about Mumia or Reparations or the state of the black nation, and not constantly question our social situations, can we be like others. Today my love-can we just be lovers?

-Jamila M. Moore



The Jazz Band (In Dedication of Kind Oliver's Creole Jazz Band)

-Candice Mosley

Forgotten Souls

I remember that day, it was a Saturday in June
My lil sister was playin wit dolls in her room
It started, Me and my lil brother were watchin cartoons.
When we heard that knock on the door, it was right before noon
My lil sister opened it, then the door swung wide
We all knew it was a nigga once he stepped inside
Then all hell broke loose, he smacked my lil brother
Broke a tooth, I jumped up, he put my neck in a noose
My lil sister stood there scared even tho my older brother told us to kill him if he came around here again
You ain't a friend You ain't no kin You aint no father to these children
No way will I let you touch my mother again
But he punched and my chest caved in
My lil brother layin on the floor, bloodied up jaw
What am I facin? is it to late to save him
I wish my mom would come to embrace him
But she didn't she was layin on her bed, half dead
With crack rock visions dancin in her head
This heathen has the crack that zombies be needing
Hands wrapped over the smack that my mom is feenin
All the grieving is forgotten, my bleeding starts to dry
As glass pipes ignite and these addicts get high

I think my next memory is months later different date and time
But nothin got safer after the papers were signed
I was assigned to a DSS foster care
The woman said they offered care, I often didn't find it there
I was too frail to fight off the older kids
So they would take my food and I had nuthin stuck to my ribs
I was malnourished lackin all things but courage
I got sick of going to bed at night wit no covers
But then I thought of my older brother and what he would do
I started swingin back on kids to get respect too
My reputation started makin peeps have deep reservations
Debatin that it wrong me to be takin home
Day after day got worse, I was cursed
Families took other kids, but to them I had no worth
I was feelin like an orphan put up on an auction block
Damn, I was unwanted stock
So u can feel my shock when this woman said to me
That I might be able to get adopted next week

And when the day came I was anxious, on my best behavior
But in my heart I knew I could not gain your favor
I wasn't cute enough, my skin too black hair too napped
The scar of my back, born from a mom who smoked crack
Matta fact my nose is to full, my lips are to thick
African descendant, I know its not what u want
What u gonna do when the winters get cold, when I gotta snotty nose
And some ashy elbows
Rusty knee caps u see that my hair's like brillow
But do u know when I sleep my head leaves oil on pillows
I held these thoughts in my mind as I met your eyes
And when you left and didn't pick me, I wasn't surprised

But it hurt and it felt like I was slowly dyin
And for the first time in a long while, I went to sleep cryin

When I woke up years had gone by, my time was over
The woman said that my mom had finally gotten sober
And I could go home
Home was the same way I left it, if a little cleaner
But I could still see the pain in everyone's demeanor
And that pain influenced me I felt the rage movin me
And I was sucked in by the waves of the streets, fluently
My sister spent her time to learn all that school trash
To me that was too slow I needed money to burn fast
Welfare checks aint enough we need more supply
I'm the man of the house now, and food I have to buy
Gotta stop the hunger pangs cop some nicer thangs
U might do the 9 to 5, but me? got brighter dreams
This life it seems easy, fast cash, two for twenties
I started wit dimes but oz's gimme more money
Went from dirt, to dro, to purp, to gold, to tai
But then I was introduced to a new sort of high
And before I knew it I was cookin up choppin rocks
Standin on blocks and runnin from cops and dodgin gun shots
And in time, my life spun outta control
And I was busted given ten years, wit no chance of parole

Now I sit in the cell to you my story I tell
Too many lives go untold so I hope u listened well
Streets jail or foster care there ain't no difference
Nobody cares that we dyin out here wit no remembrance
So now that u know will u roll wit ignorance
Or will you fight for the forgotten souls with no chance

-Broken Science (Ajahne Santa Anna)



Untitled

-Brian W. Cooperman



We Wear The Mask

-Candice Mosley

MAN Dark-skinned

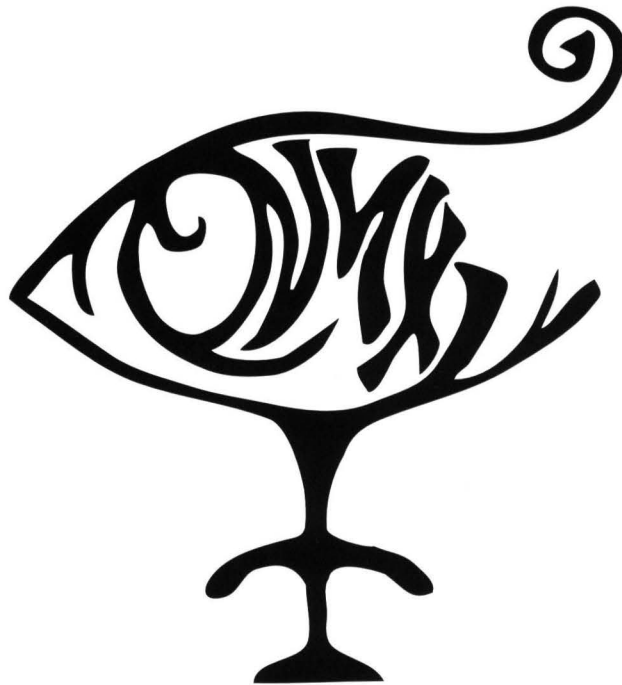
We living as all our families been through it
Soaking up pain with tightened lip
Carrying burdens on backs
Weighing heavy on hearts
Ripped is the muscle of our souls
From urban's solemn cry
The bell toils
Time spans lapsing
Men crying as everywhere turning goes faith fleeing
No feet to stand on
No will, willing to hold strong
Bones weary cause no long presence of effervescent
Waits while the making of contemporary person breaks
Reveal savage soldiers
Raw is the essence of life
Enclosed within
Heathen beginning to fight
Who gone win might vs. devil
Stripping morality of Man
Falls to the rebirth of sin
Crime encompassed with injustice
Anger managed with full
Clips n bottles of fin
Nobody knows
Watching windows turn as nights yearn
For the beckon of light
Appetite searching for dreams
Living life lurking
As depression steady seeping in
From the hands of the MAN
Calling discolored heaven spare me a murder or two
Be lenient to those true to the barren vessels of life

I, being of nature's grandeur speak to the Gods...
Revelations in states of mind conformed
Deferred like Langston
I, too am American

Walk amongst shadows
Cascading images holding
Close the wisdom of Motherland

Singing hope
Pissing pride
Laughing Hard
Cause trouble's always on my side
Like an invisible ghost
With perilous pride
I be black man personified
Living each day to the drizzle
Till I die

-Reginald Stovell



Black Woman #1

Black woman,
Don't be a bitch.
Your mamma struggled too hard and
Too long and for damn sure
Didn't raise no bitch.

Don't be a ho. Hold sacred the temple
Which is your body, hold
Constant your purity, and regard
High, your love.

Don't become no man's back hand's
Landing. Call him daddy if
Ya want to, but in return,
Let him treat you like
He should treat his mamma.

Hold your head high. Never bow down
For to bow is to admit defeat
And to be defeated is to be silenced,
To be silenced is to be forgotten.

Black woman, be a woman.
Treated as a woman, revered as a woman,
Behaved as a woman, loved as a woman,
Protected as a woman,
A woman.

-Kristin J. Hooper



Untitled

-Karen Alroy

Platonic

But I say she's just a friend
But I say she's just a friend
Though I pray we transcend,
We still remain platonic.

I awoke and watched the sunrise
The experience pleasantly weird
It seems to describe us perfectly
A warm sun and frosty earth

I mentally reset to her image often
And recall our exchanges of wit,
Here and there she claims me a player
But I'm a female enthusiast

It's said these things take a while,
I only get 200 minutes daytime,
And she speed-reads my actions
While I struggle through phonics.

Expressing my self by song
I lick lullabies in her lobes,
Optimisms holding me unbowed
Serenading this fortress of solitude

Daily I sing to her on cold hills
These ignored lyrics and melodies
Sail to Love's Bermuda triangle
Thus with her I then troll silently.

Her perfume vapor-rubs the pain
From my Freudian slips
Caught red-lipped
My mugshot is some makeshift smile

She tells me to up my game
But noone informed me I was playing,
Lost in my musings I may have missed
Cupid's eclipse of a closed heart.

Dang...
Hope To See You Tomorrow, Love

-Brent Patterson

Played

Verse I

Do I have a reason to be mad
I heard all about you and the rep that you had
But the way that you came up to me
With your style, and your smile, and personality
Had me thinking it was just all talk
Because what people don't know, they just tend to make up
And besides, I can't deny you were looking so fly
I had to give you a try

Verse II

So you kept pursuing patiently
Day after day asking for my company
To the movies, the bar, or just chillin' in your car
You said you like to conversate while looking at the stars
But all the time you were talking shit
You're a pro at what you do, that I have to admit
I should've listened to what other people had to say
But I didn't trust my instincts, turns out I got played

Chorus

Played (2X)- I was just a conquest in your masquerade
Played (2X)- like old chewing gum, you spit me out to get a new taste
Played (2X)- if you're still confused at what I'm talking about
Played (2X)- you better listen up 'cause I'm about to spell it out

Bridge

P- is for the way I got persuaded,
By the way you came with game and the smooth lines that you stated.
L- is for the lies out of your mouth.
Having my believing they were true without a doubt.
A- is for the angle that you took.
Using all your skills perfectly as from a book.
Y- is for the question that I ask.
Wishing I could transfer back in time to change the past
E- is for how I fell so easily.
Right into the trap you had set out for me.
D- is the deception that I felt.
Watching full of pain as you kissed somebody else

Chorus II

Played (2X)- I was just a conquest in your masquerade
Played (2X)- like old chewing gum, you spit me out to get a new taste
Played (2X)- why'd you have to go out and do me that way
Played (2X)- before I go, baby I have one more thing to say

Verse III

You're such a waste of a good face
I gotta put you in your place
Form your medicine, I hope that
One day you will get a taste
You think you're slick
You've gone so long
Doing girls, all types of wrong
Listen up 'cause you're about
To hear your name up in a song
-John-

Verse IV

Oh! you thought I wouldn't shout you out
That I'd keep it to myself
And wonder what you're all about
Well, you see you've made a big mistake
Because I will not stop until the whole
World know that you're a fake
And to you haters who are asking
Why I'm blowing up his spot
Thinking I'm a bitter girl who just likes to talk a lot
Y'all are hatin 'cause you know
That I', messing up his flow
Gotta come up with some new shit
'cause this old game's gotta go

Chorus III

Played (2X)- I was just a conquest in your masquerade
Played (2X)- like old chewing gum, you spit me out to get a new taste
Played (2X)- should've thought twice before you did me wrong
Played (2X)- betcha didn't think I'd call your name out in a song

-Angie Brice

Suspension

With a question in his eyes and fear on his tongue
He whispers, "Who are you and what have you done?"
I smile sadly before answering, "What do you mean?"
He says that he hasn't slept for 10 months and 11 days
Lying in the bed each night shifting restlessly on green silk sheets
Staring across the darkness as Sleep
Sits watching him from her chair across the room
But never crosses-
Sleep never crosses the room to meet him
"What have you done?"
"I don't know."
He says that as he is getting dressed
He hears me in the kitchen cooking breakfast
And singing along with the oldies station in a terribly off-key voice
Finding himself laughing, opening his mouth to yell,
"Baby, you know you can't sing!"
Before realizing that Baby isn't there

In the middle of the day
You answer the phone and hear me say
That I was just thinking of you
But I haven't called, and you can't stop thinking
Just can't stop thinking, no you can't stop thinking of me
All day long I swim amidst your brain waves
Splashing and diving and fucking up your thoughts
Mind spinning and swirling, inwardly screaming for an end to the incessant witchcraft
Praying for the night, dreading the hot sultry nights when I will cease to swim and will
Rest on the shores of your throbbing beaches

When darkness falls I softly enter the room
Stopping only to as Sleep to kinds wait outside
Before I sit at the edge of the bed
Watching you stare up at me from the silky forest green sheets
With fear in your eyes and longing on your tongue
As you struggle to whisper, "Who are you and what have you done?"
Apologetically I want to explain
The reasons why you feel my hot caresses
Long after I have departed

But words will never describe why
The sounds of my sigh
Against your neck
Has driven you mad
And my nails against your spine
Laugh at the hours of time
For you will feel me in eternity

I want to explain
That the source of this voodoo that I do
Is hidden away at my birthplace in the center of the galaxies
In a pheromonic box labeled WOMAN
Perhaps I have taken more than my share
Perhaps I should not have brought it here
Perhaps...that is what I have done and where I am from
But who I am
Is that which even I still do not know
I am sorry that I could not stay
That my ghost still haunts your days
That you arise from sleepless nights
With singed fingertips and scorched lips
Having been unknowingly
Kissed
By the daughter of the sun

-Candace Gomez

Papi

Papi has a European nose.
I noticed this the other day
As I looked up at my *prieto* Papi,
Negro like an unsweetened bar of *cocóa*
Kissed by the sun,
With a European nose.

There it sits in the middle of his face,
Proud and regal, like a *conquistador*.
"Your papi is a *moreno fino*," my *tías* say,
As if needing to explain
why my fair-skinned Mami chose to marry him.
There it sits in the middle of his face,
A European nose.

"*Cuidado*," he said to me
When he saw I got my nose pierced
(Because only *tigres* walk around
with pierced noses).
He does not know
That by piercing my nose
I have reclaimed it
As my own

-Yasmin Peña

Take Your Place

Back breaking
Tears of crimson heat streaming down
Her bronzed face
 She lie weeping
 Tears of her past, of her future,
Of her past, of
 Her
 Fu-ture
Hot as lava, cold as ice,
 Her tears pierced her heart as her heart pierced her
 Mind
Her mind enslaved by her heart, enslaved by her mind, enslaved by her
Love - her child - her love.
 He loved her
 For 15 minutes.
He gave her a lifetime of love from
15 minutes.
 A lifetime of hurt, of fear, of heart-ache
 Her heart
 Ached
As she stared into the eyes of her child she could not feed, her child who would cry her same tears,
share her same fears, ache of heart, and yearn of mind as she
 Had.
Her child
 Hands so tiny, lips pursed ever so delicately, mind fooled ever so slightly by the lies of life that
she could still
 Smile
Her child whose head bowed as her mother readied herself for another 15 minutes of
 Tan-ta-lie-zing
Dollar-making
 Love.
Tat-
 Ta-tat-ta
 Her child heard as her stilettos
Tat———ta———tat———taed
 Across the stage as her heart sank and her pride swallowed as it had for so many
other 15 minutes
 Of love
 Making
Of love taking
 Of back breaking.

-Kristin J. Hooper

Sexual/Sensual

I write poems.

I write poems with teeth and nails. Poems so alive with meaning and purpose they make limericks seem unread.

I write poems.

I write poems about women and the bandages they wear.

I write poems on broken homes, and reveal common streets as sacrilegious war zones.

I bounce ideas off of Blake and Gibrán asking, "when does a prophet have too much, when is it done?"

I talk revolution with Sanchez and Malcolm saying, "The best politics are within the bedroom," and, "what does it mean to be a woman warrior in so-called times of peace?"

I write poems infused with blues, hues of racial politics, sex, and everyday shit get thrown into my mix.

I write poems like Coltrane composes songs, each note carefully crafted to be political in its own way, and to make no sense on Monday, but plenty on Sunday and always leave people questioning me.

I write poems.

I write poems as beautiful as orange moons, and stretch myself naked before my instruments, light some incense and take literary experience to a whole new level.

I am clever, so I lock the door, cut myself off from the outside world, reveal the curves in my J's and the bend of my K's as I press this woman's work against paper and pen.

Each time I sin I feel more married to my craft.

At last, I write poems.

-Jamila M. Moore

Extension Chord

The microphone...
is an extension of my arm...

As my words caress its fingertips I am empowered by
the vibrations of sound emanating from its
depths
As the music inspires fire to retire from my lips,
I perspire from the heat I speak, left weak
in the knees
But stronger than Hercules...
in the mind
Sharp like a dagger- penetrating your eardrum- beating like timpani
cuz the symphony of sound is an epiphany which strikes instantly
Stimulating your ears with lyrical candy rain
Until your other 4 senses are jealous,
Wishing you could see the rhythm
And feel the melody
And smell the chords
And taste each... and... every... note
Now, words cannot be tasted but if they could my rhymes would be soul food
Transcending divides with its healing power
Words ascending past colors, images, fleeting moments- words last eternally...
See, they say a picture's worth a thousand words, but my words could paint a thousand pictures
And the music is my inspiration for elevation...
Each chord is a woman's touch
Each beat is her smile
Her harmonies invite me, makin me wanna stay awhile
I get lost in her mystique, her appeal, her essence
But like any man, I'm not gonna stop to ask for directions...
Cuz even though I'm lost, I feel like I've won
And I am one.. with the music...

The microphone...
is an extension of my soul



Untitled

-Greg Hunt

-AfroDZak
(Pete Shungu)

The Calling

She heard the rumble. Or rather, she felt it. Slow and steady. Like the rising intensity of a volcano about to erupt..

The sensations moved and picked her up like the swelling tide when it captures someone in its undercurrent.

Forcefully, with no escape. She could not discern if the feeling came from without or from within. Could it be the sound of her beating heart that pulsed so strongly in her ears? All she knew was that the sea of faces about her seemed so far away, As if on some distant horizon. They did not matter. This she knew. Knew, as she placed one foot in front of the other, steadily and deliberately, that there was no turning back. It was then that the first tear fell and then another and another until there were currents staining her face. Leaving physical traces of a transformation.

Only she [and he] knew what they meant: a mixed expression of fear, uncertainty, determination and pure love.

It was in this way, on this day that she gave her heart, her life... her all... to the Lord.

-Ola J. Friday



The City From My Window

-Jasmine Wallace



That Day

-Jamila Moore

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