

BLACK BIRD PRESS NEWS & REVIEW

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“Revolution is based on land. Land is the basis of freedom, justice and equality.” - Malcolm X

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Guest Editor

Dr. Ayodele Nzinga

City of Oakland's

First Poet Laureate

Producer of BAMBD FEST

Black August 2021



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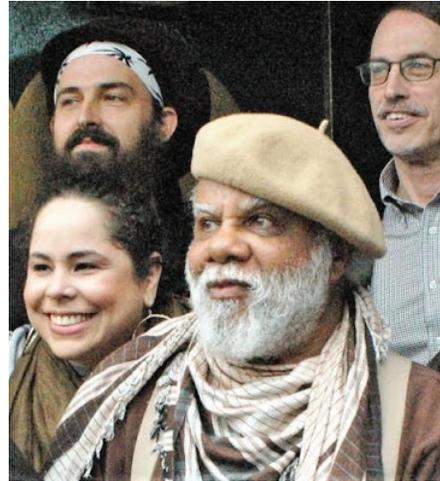
AYODELE NZINGA

Elegy for Terry Collins by Marvin X

July 8, 2021

Tip of spear
Look of Lion King
Dapper Swagger Classic
Like yr uncle Malcolm X
Yo Mama Ella Collins bad too
Didn't she run Boston?
Collins family owned land in dirty South
no share-croppers jim crow slaves
black land owners shot back
better ax somebody
Ella Collins bout it bout it
Paid Malcolm's way to Mecca
You and brother Rodnel
Royal brothers I say
Glad to know you both
Wife Cat Cecelia
daughters too, Renya, Kiara
KPOO family royal
We know JJ got the baton
Joe Rudolph taught us all
how to talk on radio
No matter how many takes
One more Joe said

Oh, Terry Revolutionary
You interviewed me so many times
We gotta book in KPOO archives
So many nights so many subjects, local
global events
Africa, Palestine Iran Syria Afghanistan
You my draft counselor when I refused to fight in Vietnam
I did exile twice listening to you, fled to Canada,
Mexico City, Belize
Terminal Island Federal Prison too
Oh, Terry Revolutionary



ANCESTOR TERRY COLLINS

For more than five decades, Terry was a beacon and mainstay of Bay Area resistance: leader of the SF State Strike (1968-69), Black Panther, Founder and President of KPOO-fm Community Radio, Stalwart defender of political prisoners.



MARVIN X READING ELEGY FOR
TERRY COLLINS
photo Harrison Chastang

DANNY GLOVER
AND
MARVIN X



Soldier, you relieved of post
Let the new generation soldiers carry your coffin
Let them know weight of revolutionary love action
study your life
revolution beyond color class sex gender
Revolution is seizure of power nada mas
Change is revolution nada mas

Oh, Terry Revolutionary, you made change
Black Studies change, you changed the airways
with black voices, independent liberated
You changed chains off brains
preached til you could say no more
do no more
What shall we do without you
alone exhausted
solitude of our lives
inundated with isolation
terrified in rooms
scared of virus vaccine too
watching elders dancing daily into ancestor land
We must catch and hold high torch of revolution

Oh, Terry Revolutionary, you did 85 years in Babylon
Old Jewish New York Communist Party women told me
Better be a Communist
We Communists live long time
Gus Hall checked out at 90
You did your revolutionary duty
for all to see
freed everybody
wife, children, comrades, community, world
and me!
a friend to the end
true friend
Love you, Terry

heart broken
want to cry
Tears don't come
May come today
I cry for your love
tenacity lessons
for generations to come.

Oh, Terry Revolutionary
remember the Black Arts Movement 50th Celebration
at Laney College
Intergenerational Discussion with your daughter,
Phavia's child and my daughter Nefertiti
whose words went viral
"Dad, you say you gonna pass the baton
but you won't pass the baton
we qualified and ready
so pass the baton!"
Oh, daughters Renya and Kiara
Dad passed the baton
Don't you feel it in your hands?
run for your life to finish line of liberation
see him there
If you fall he will catch you
time after time!
We elders will catch you
time after time
feel like you slipping into darkness
give us a call

Oh, Terry Revolutionary, our work is not in vain
Children grandchildren coming strong
Like Garvey said
Look for them in the Whirlwind!
--Marvin X
7/8/21
Revised 7/22/21

BAMBDKFEST POETRY

this festival is for the people
my people
them people
you people
us people
we the people
in the west east north
the people that love
the people that hate
the people that love to hate
who whisper behind their hands
roll their eyes
who wish you bad luck
wish they had your hand
to the people who hate loving so much
this is a hug for the lover in you
this is your jam
this is your story
we love you
for the people here
for the people gone
for those coming back
for those gone for good
for us
this is for us
all of us
we create therefore we are
altogether everything
& then some
more

BAMBDKFEST 2021 International
www.bamdbfest.com
We do it for the culture.

BAM!

Ayodele “WordSlanger” Nzinga,
Poet Laureate, Oakland CA
Producing Artistic Director, BAMBDKFEST 2021
International



Dr. Ayodele Nzinga, First Poet Laureate, City of
Oakland, Producer of BAMBDKFEST 2021

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San Francisco Emeritus Poet Laureate Jan Mirikitani Joins Ancestors at 80



Left to Right: Rev. Cecil Williams, wife Jan Mirikitani, Marvin X and Dr. Nathan Hare
photo Adam Turner

The transition of poet Jan Mirikitani has rocked San Francisco's literary and spiritual community. As she was someone dear to me, I am totally devastated. She was not only a fellow poet but when I entered drug recovery at Glide Church, Jan and Cecil literally saved my life as they did the plethora of drug addicts in San Francisco's Tenderloin. When I entered Glide's Facts on Crack, Jan and Cecil did everything to help me. Rev. Cecil Williams showed me so much love, Jan told her husband, "Cecil, we're just being Marvin's co-dependent!" And Jan was right because whatever dope fiend lie I told Cecil to get money for Crack, he acquiesced. But when Cecil was to be honored, he invited me and his assistant, J.B. Sanders RIP, to be guests at his table at Bimbo's 365 Club in North Beach. I told him a dope fiend lie that I needed money to get my clothes out the cleaners, instead we got loaded on Crack and didn't show. We had crossed the red line of Jan's patience. We had indeed disrespected her husband. When J.B. and I came to Glide the next day, Jan put her husband out of his office, closed the door and gave us a poetic ass whupping! She said we hurt her husband and she didn't like it. "If my husband didn't love you guys so much, I wouldn't do shit for you!" It took a long time for Jan and Cecil to heal from our failure to show. Still, Jan told people, "Marvin X woke me up to my ethnicity, but he's been a thorn in my side ever since!" We love you Jan! Thank you for the agape love you gave me and everyone who came to Glide Church!

--Marvin X 7/30/21

A Play in Two Parts

By Tongo Eisen-Martin

English is a lukewarm relationship with your people
With practice, I met every white person in the world

The state's pastel gibberish and
White noise watchlists transmuted by agents who
point finger pistols
at Black children...for funded nature
And now it's winter...or adulthood in america

Retail awards and standard issue bullets left on a plate outside my door
Plate design inspired by the gold-trim razor wire around mother Afrika
-A congressional motif

Rope tickles neck

I am a human sacrifice/ my parallel employment --- pocket full of fists---
defining efforts to be part of a famous family/ the hospital bed shakes
Now I am a white man's son
...to quote the people who left me for dead

Nervous energy all over the constitution
...I owe you a war

I had a firm grasp on my mortality
I had an idea for a sonnet and a prison wall all picked out

Besides the nightstick, I know no other colors today

My double grows in Mississippi
My shoulders turned towards where lesser gods landed
Where the light changes revolutions

Pure america now confronts the woman I love

Psalm sketched
A sketch of gallows foreplay
(You've taken me back
Your humble narrator)

Gallows band stand
and every place she turned my life into decent artwork

Imagine us
the death of commerce
velvet gloves passing around our FBI file

Police station muscling for robber baron free associations

The sum of all corporate defense mechanisms

Maybe a pale horse hoof

Policing that don't involve populations
Just population-symbols

Rope tickles a trumpet of God's
In the beginning was the word for a little bit

Rope tickles the water

Out-evolved by the police state, the suburbs
retract
bullwhips dealt liberally in a prison society
vice president's initials on every nightstick
saying, "the next person out the door
better mean america no harm"

I've been blinded by this sun sitting on the
wall

Our door hinges in the water

I wish my imagination was formal
Deathtrap narrator book-burning the hospital lobby

Gallows king

I am a revolutionary
there too



SF Poet Laureate Tongo reading at memorial
For Terry Collins
Photo Johnnie Burrell

BLACK ART BLACK AUGUST 2021



20x24. Grease marker. Paper. Airbrush On Canvas. "Herstory" 5K.
by Jahlil Nzinga

Contact: nzingastudios@gmail.com

BLACK ART BLACK AUGUST 2021

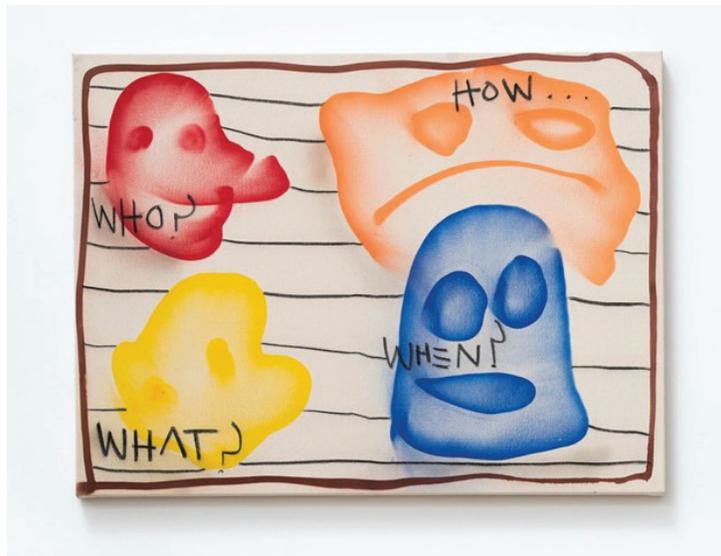


20x16. Acrylic, grease marker, Charcoal, aerosol, correction fluid on canvas.

“Time ain’t free” 5K

by Jahlil Nzinga

Contact: nzingastudios@gmail.com



sol, charcoal on canvas. “Journalism”9K

by Jahlil Nzinga

Contact: nzingastudios@gmail.com

BLACK ART BLACK AUGUST 2021



20x24. Grease marker, charcoal, airbrush acrylic on canvas.

“Young shiners” 5K

by Jahlil Nzinga

Contact: nzingastudios@gmail.com



40x30. Ink, acrylic on canvas.

“Here I am” 9K

by Jahlil Nzinga

Contact: nzingastudios@gmail.com

Black August: Incarcerated Organizers Call for Mass Actions in August to Abolish Prisons

Incarcerated Organizers Call for Mass Actions in August to Abolish Prisons



San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, California, on December 14, 2020

BY
Ella Fassler, Truthout
August 1, 2021

The Road to Abolition

*In 2020, during just the first two months of the pandemic, incarcerated people collectively participated in at least 106 COVID-19 related rebellions in the United States. This year, organizers with **Jailhouse Lawyers Speak (JLS)**, a national collective of imprisoned people fighting for human rights, are calling on non-incarcerated people to share the baton by holding “**National Shut ‘em Down Demonstrations**” on August 21 and September 9.*

*These are historically significant dates in the Black liberation struggle against the prison-industrial complex. On August 21, 1971, prison guards **assassinated** incarcerated theorist, organizer and revolutionary George Jackson at San Quentin State Prison in California. The next day, incarcerated people at Attica Correctional Facility went on hunger strike in his honor and, on September 9, 1971, more than **1,200 people took over** the prison, demanding an end to “slave labor” and improved living conditions. Four days later, Gov. Nelson Rockefeller ordered New York State Police to brutally suppress the rebellion. Twenty-nine incarcerated people and 10 hostages died in the raid.*

*Echoing this spirit of resistance, JLS is urging supporters to hold demonstrations at Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) concentration camps, higher learning institutions with ties to prison labor, and jails and prisons across the United States, to highlight “prisoners’ historical struggles and the current political struggles to dismantle the prison industrial slave complex.” Supporters can share the **JLS event flyers** on social media, **donate**, **order stickers**, network with local organizations to plan a demonstration and host events leading up to the days of action.*

dark art by Ayodele Nzinga

my dark art
grazed
you truth
raw stuns
like max on drums
ancient sacred primal
dark art
mesmerized you
slipped in baptized
you approached invited
me to cite
sing tap entertain you
collecting my shroud of
shadows gathering thunder
trailing wailing women
prayers of unborn children
sliding the eagles
back into
the book
smiling
like you like
walked away
bleeding
dark art
bloody footsteps
stale air last breaths
centuries of trauma
soul
wet from the ocean
stopping to pour out
gin for Ogun
me & the eagles
smile
not like you like
breathing deeply
in
dark hearts
where sun
shines sublimely
refined refracted reflected
the inside of pure
darkness beyond dark
draped in black
three eyed
warrior
drum hearted

fire burning
nomo ignited
verbal vampire
invited
assumed you knew
she travel well
armed
w/dark art
spit spells
weaving existence
ways out the no way
sopranos sing here
high like corpses swinging
strangely in trees
in deeply purple southern breezes
drug by horses through the north
informing the curse
now invoked
dipped in indigo
coffee sugar wrapped in cotton
invisible
but you see
i see
so you invited
we accept
me & the eagles
free
no quarter given
none asked
no prisoners promised
no surrender no retreat
blocked exits for several lifetimes
syndicated rerunning on BET
there is no escape
hold your breath
listen for
them
footsteps
syncopated like drums
slaves
walking on the bottom
of the ocean
dark art
tongue like sword
freed by
armies of bones
walking on water

swelling w/ recruits
rising from graveyards
pregnant w/ unresolved
history projectiles
jaggedly inventive inverse
conjuring murky magic
deliciously dangerous
perniciously persistent
hard to kill
dying to live
we are here
to entertain
double-sided axes
tilt your world
we on a different axis
listen closely to access this
now horns play
the drum never stopped
that's the circle unbroken
beating hearts
waking walking invoking
the dead we are here
dahomey fire
zulu spears
protection shields
not a thing to lose
drown you in bluest blue
drums never stop beating
bass begins
she sings but
no tapping less
zavion come over
baraka is gone
fingers move in memory
but no tapping
she sangin
but
got to go through
the back
door to save
your sorry soul
dark art
breaking your fragile
heart bending the
notion of me
nappy uncharted
jazz fall into my ocean
swim in it

jump jim crow fits in it
fill jail cells with it
live in fear of it
choking on greedily ingested
appropriated you tried to eat
it correct it erase it
mass assimilate it
come to the picnic
cut up the body
take a small piece home
inject it into your ass
lips & tits
i have come to help
you digest your
dreams of me
captured consumed
uncured still wild
monk miles marvin x
a thousand galaxies
ahead beyond
sun ra murdered
the fucking pale
i have come to bury it
crossing over
broken lines in alabama
dark roads in mississippi
sunrises over Georgia
homeless encampments outside Disneyland
itinerant refugee landless
razor smooth
few possessions
insert
your confessions
here
on the altar of my
dark art
beating heart
naked on stage
blinded by searchlights
they come mostly at night
shotguns under the bed
you can meet god tonight
pray it's your god
my godz don't play
there may be no overcoming
hold your breath
we are here
wet from the water

still purple
swinging
crosses on necks
seeing godz in the mirror
resisting existential crucifixion
tracks of bitter tears
smelling of dried blood
sweat from climbing
heavy rank-ass pain
too stubborn to die
broke raggedy hope
strangling
hold your breath
fly fly fly my granny said
grow wings too many holes
in the ground
she cried she cried she cried
can my pain change you
right there
they drank the tears
the ocean
left shimmering bones dancing
on dry land
no tapping
invincible drums beat
this is dark art
dark hearts
beating
she cried she cried she cried
the horns stopped
hex dropped
not a damn eye dry
feed my ocean
this is dark art
strung on trees
underwater
on dry ground
bones dancing
sharpening machetes
hold your breath
we in the desert now
just the eagles' lions & apes
walking with me
grannys weeping over dead children
kept in urns too poor for the cemetery
we all here
are you here
another one shot down
can't eat your guilt
born hungry

got dreams deferred
looking for justice
feeling like fela kuti
dancers
bones & feathers
eagles machetes razors
nothing to lose
we here
are you here
something should be burning
are you praying
to my dark heart
pray
poems never end
because
then
what
you breathe
here



PLAYAZ
IN RESIDENCE
1540 BROADWAY
OAKLAND

Liberation as a Daily Practice

By Asantewaa Boykin RN

The act of freeing oneself is an exercise of assertive faith. The definition of liberation or the act of liberating is subjective. Subjective to our lived experience, our access to resources and space to conceptualize the possibility of freedom. Our collective and individual paths to liberation will never be identical, but in order to achieve liberation one first has to believe in an “existence,” despite having no evidence that the said “existence” will ever materialize.

Imagine being born enslaved and deciding to flee into the night in search of a freedom that you have only heard exists. Only knowing for certain that failure would end in pain and most likely death and then choosing - to run anyway. This is assertive faith.

Passive faith would be the kind of faith that calls someone to pray and wait. To pray and not plan, to pray and not take action.

Before we embark upon a journey of liberation we first need to identify and understand the oppressive force, then be able to visualize and embody our liberated state apart from the oppressive force.

Self-determination in the absence of unnecessary harm (in my opinion) is what it means to be liberated. Understanding that my individual liberation and our collective liberation are interdependent.

The Oppressive Force

Create a narrative based on the below questions that are applicable to your current condition.

-What is the natural state of the oppressive force you/we want to be liberated from? Is it flesh (person), system (government), emotional (energy), or biological (addiction).

-Understand how the oppressive force holds power over you/us. e.g. “Anger prevents me from being strategic because I often react instead of strategizing.”

-How does the oppressive force maintain that power? Who or what bestowed the power upon or maintains the power of the oppressive force e.g. the police are empowered by the local city or county governments to have jurisdiction in my community.

-Identify weaknesses in this Chain of Power. e.g. If I wanted to escape from prison, I would have to identify an exploitable weakness in the security system, like a guard who has an addiction to a substance that I have access to.

Example:

I want to be liberated from feelings of self doubt. The natural state of self doubt is negative thoughts, emotions, or energy. Self doubt holds power over me when I believe the negative thoughts. That power is maintained when I engage in behavior that affirms these thoughts. My desire to be liberated from self doubt creates weakness in the Chain of Power.

The Liberated Self/Community

Create a narrative based on the below questions that are applicable to your current condition.

-What does your liberated self look like? e.g. race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or none of the above. Most importantly these designations must be appointed, or not appointed, by **you**.

-What does your liberated self find joy in? Making art, dancing, cooking, writing, or resting?

-What does a liberated people/community look like, and how do you exist in it?

-What power have you/we obtained that allows you/us to maintain that liberated state?

Example:

My liberated self is a Black woman of western/central African ancestry. I live in a community where I and community members are free of the threat of incarceration and police. I enrich my community by creating art and artfully

creating systems of care. I am free of addiction and have well developed health coping skills that are grounded in intense self-appreciation. I and my community are self-sustaining in the areas of food, housing, health, and education. We engage in cooperative economics centered around the barter or exchange of goods and services over the use of digital or paper currency.

Practice

Liberation as an act is an inherently spiritual practice. In the backdrop of most, if not all, social and political movements you will find a connection to spirituality. A perfect example is the visible re-emergence of “African Traditional Religions” inside popular social/political movements among Diasporic Africans in North America. In turn, we see that liberation is a common theme across spiritual practices e.g. Salvation, Redemption, Enlightenment, being in alignment with one’s Destiny, Nirvana, and Satori.

Practice: The actual application or use of an idea, belief, or method, as opposed to theories relating to it.

No matter what “practice” we choose or find ourselves drawn to, the most essential piece is to practice. Visualise, read, run, focus, and/or meditate. Find folks who feel the same or similarly and talk about it, create art that envisions it, read books about it, learn whatever you can, and put those theories into practice. Moving matter from one place or state to another place or state requires energy. In other words, moving ourselves from an oppressed state to a liberated state will require energy/movement/action, or assertive faith.

Collective Practice

It would be wonderful to accredit the tangible reality of Reparations solely to Dr. Weber. To do this would ignore the collective energy used to shift Reparations from a topic to a potential reality. How many times have you or someone you know said, “When that Reparations money hits, I’m going to _____” or, “They ain’t never gonna give us Reparation,” or, “Reparations can or should look like _____.” No matter what one is saying or thinking about the topic of Reparations, they are speaking about and focused on Reparations. This is essence of the term “Bringing attention (energy or focus) to an issue”

Individual Practice

What we focus on, we become. If we remain focused on our needs we will find ourselves in a constant state of needing. If we focus on abundance we will think, feel, and experience a state of abundance. This is how two people could have similar life experiences yet have differing perspectives, or witness the same incident and have different accounts.

Practice = Attention

Practice = Focus

Practice = Action

Find images, music, literature, fashion, or art that is a reflection of you in a liberated state. Allow yourself to feel it, smell it, visualize it, even dream about the liberated state. Since you’ve identified a weakness in the chain of power of an oppressive force in your life, exploit it! If you know that self-doubt is an oppressive force in your life and understand that negative thoughts empower that force, your desire to be free of those thoughts creates weakness in that Chain of Power! Then, everytime one of those thoughts comes up, call it a lie.

Never forget, opposition is a necessary force and should be expected specifically on a path of liberation. The presence of opposition or hardship is merely evidence of energies balancing themselves, meaning the oppressive force is being disrupted and attempting to maintain power. Take a deep breath, focus, then take action... your liberated self awaits!

No, the Oakland Police Department was not “defunded”

Cat Brooks

First printed in the San Francisco Chronicle

Starting July 1, all hell is going to break loose in Oakland.

Under the city council’s new budget proposal, a financially gutted Oakland Police Department will be ill-equipped to deal with a rising crime wave.

\$18 million dollars was taken from the police department and put into non-existent programs with no proven track record.

According to OPD police chief LeRonne Armstrong, “As of July 1, there will not be one additional resource to help address public safety...” Well, except [MACRO](#), the Oakland model that will respond to mental health crises without law enforcement. Approximately 10% of [OPD calls in 2019](#) were for mental health crises and medical services while only 4% were for violent crime.

“We don’t have the number of violence interrupters that are trained ready to do the work today” said Councilmember Loren Taylor. Well except for the experts at Urban Peace Movement, BOSS, Community Ready Corps and Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice.

“I believe that until we have proven alternatives, we cannot destroy Oakland’s current public safety system at a time when we are losing so many to gun violence,” Schaaf said. Oh, she must mean ones beside those documented in mountains of research and the actual implementation of non-police violence prevention strategies that exist in Oakland, California and across the globe.

The problem with these pithy soundbites is that none of them are even remotely true.

The Oakland Police Department was not “defunded.” Not only do they hold on to their \$300 million a year budget, they actually got an increase of \$9 million. That number is certain to grow as Oakland continues to pay out settlement claims for uses of force and police overtime costs continue to surge.

The Oakland City Council did pass a budget which invests \$18 million into violence prevention, the unhoused, the arts and mental health support services; things that actually prevent crime rather than react to it after the fact. This \$18 million was taken from money the mayor *proposed* to give to police in the next budget cycle, not from money they already had.

Community groups like the [Anti Police-Terror Project](#) which created the Defund Police Coalition comprised of 13 BIPOC led flatlands based organizations like [Community Ready Corps](#), [Black Arts Movement Business District CDC \(BAMBD CDC\)](#) and [Oakland Rising](#) are thrilled with this historic investment of dollars into the communities that need it most. State-imposed conditions of poverty breed trauma and lack of opportunity and thus ... crime.

We should be celebrating. Instead, fear-mongering and truth-twisting are in full effect.

Following the vote, Councilmember Loren Taylor, whose district includes historically Black parts of East Oakland, released a [statement](#) saying that the passed budget did not center the voices of the most impacted people, would make life more dangerous for these residents and that it perpetuated historical trends of disinvestment in East Oakland.

This is a gross manipulation of Black people's righteous fear, frustration and pain.

- 1) The grassroots coalitions that pushed for this budget talked to literally thousands of residents in East and West Oakland who [supported defunding the police](#) and investing in community.
- 2) There is no data anywhere that supports the statement that more cops equal less violent crime
- 3) It's true Oaklanders are not treated equally when it comes to budgets and services -- and East Oakland is where large percentages of Oakland's violence and poverty are concentrated. But Taylor should have been the most vocal supporter of this budget because clearly the massive amounts of money we give to OPD every year is not keeping his constituents safe from street violence. Simultaneously, it is precisely his constituents who suffer under the boot of [police violence](#).

After the council's vote, the mayor [asserted](#) that the new budget will "destroy" the public safety net in Oakland. As of this week, Oakland was at 65 homicides, more than double the number we had at this same time last year.

What safety net and who is being kept safe?

Police have the resources and the bodies now. Yet they have not been able to prevent, interrupt or even adequately respond to the crime surge. That's because you cannot achieve peace with violence and you cannot arrest your way out of poverty.

Oakland's police chief LeRonne Armstrong held a [press conference](#) claiming that as of July 1st, police were going to lose the \$18 million they never had and that all hell was gonna break loose. My words – not his. While Oakland's fiscal year does begin on July 1, no shifts in funding or practice – save for the city's launch of MACRO, will happen until 2022. That ensures an entire year of transition time to beef up organizations like Urban Peace Movement and Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice who are already doing the work.

Following the tragic murder of DaShawn Rhoades during a Juneteenth celebration at [Lake Merritt](#), Armstrong said "[violence prevention](#) would not have stopped this."

Huh? Prevention doesn't stop violence?

Maybe he's right that had we started violence prevention 24 hours before the tragedy we wouldn't have been able to do anything about DaShawn's death and maybe we won't be able to prevent anything in the next couple of days or weeks. What the data show, however, is that when the dollars begin to flow into humane mental health responses, violence interrupters, trauma responders, arts and other social services, people's needs will be met, healing will begin and violence will decrease. Like [Tha Lower Bottom Playaz](#) in West Oakland, who with minimal city resources, literally take youth out of our streets and put them on a stage to keep them safe or this study by the [National Center for Biotechnology Information](#) showing the positive impacts of investing in prevention.

The unwillingness to admit that the status quo isn't working is a willingness to let Black bodies continue to die.

We all want to live in safe neighborhoods and thriving communities. I grew up poor with a single working mother and had more than my share of dalliances with danger. I was that woman in the abusive relationship terrified to call the police for help because I didn't want to die at their hands. I was the kid whose father was taken away from me and sent to a cage because he suffered from substance abuse issues. And I am the single working mother trying to keep my daughter alive in Oakland.

Even the [United Nations](#) called us one of the worst actors for how we treat our most vulnerable community members.

The city council has just presented us with an amazing opportunity to break this cycle; but we have to ignore the fear-mongering.

The status quo isn't working. I look forward to rolling up my sleeves and supporting the implementation of a new way of doing things – and of building Tha Town into everything we know can be.

The Black Vendors Association Awarded Grant



Marvin X and Vendor Angelo Jackson,
Trainer of the Black Vendors Association

I have stood watching Angelo do his thing. He knows the proper handing of people the Muslims tried to teach us in the NOI but many didn't the master the lesson. Go stand and watch Angelo engage the people with his beautiful bass voice. Angelo is a businessman and focused to be successful. I have observed him serving the poorest of the poor, the white, black, hustler, rapper, pimp, ho, alas, who doesn't need soap, deodorant, toilet paper, incense, oils, men's drawers, etc.?

Since most of us elders will soon be ancestors, the Black Vendors Association's focus is on the youth if they will step to the front of the line to accept the baton. I said long ago if youth can sell dope, they can sell anything. It takes the same energy to sell legal goods as it does to sell illegal goods. If they can cut the dope, weigh the dope, package the dope, promote the dope, secure the dope, keep the money straight on pain of death, they can do the same with legal goods. As per jobs, many youth suffer post traumatic slave syndrome and will never be able to hold a job, so entrepreneurship is their way of survival and success. FYI, America discovered

veterans returning home from Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan and numerous wars to maintain white supremacy, also suffer post traumatic stress and will never be able to hold study jobs, so America is sending veterans to schools and colleges to learn entrepreneurship. Vending may be the only way of survival for many of our youth in the hood. FYI, in the 80s when I was a Crack addict, I used to hustle the Homeless Newspaper in San Francisco, making often \$400.00 per day to support my Crack habit. During the 1984 Democratic Convention in San Francisco, I sold political buttons at Market and Powell and made \$2,000.00 per day. The San Francisco Chronicle called me the Button King! The old men standing around Market and Powell watching me hustle buttons, estimated I made \$300.00 per hour. Call 510-575-7148 for more information.

We are happy to announce the Black Vendors Association was awarded a generous grant from the Silicon Valley Community Foundation. We thank them for their support.



The Anti Police-Terror Project is a Black-led, multi-racial, intergenerational coalition that seeks to build a replicable and sustainable model to eradicate police terror in communities of color. We support families surviving police terror in their fight for justice, documenting police abuses and connecting impacted families and community members with resources, legal referrals, and opportunities for healing. APTP began as a project of the ONYX Organizing Committee.



untitled #10 (black boy wonder)

INT. AN OLD ALL - AMERICAN DIVE BAR

EMMETT TILL and JESUS CHRIST walk into a bar. They grab seats at the bar stools. JESUS orders whiskey on the rocks. EMMETT orders a rum and coke. Both sip silently until the pool table nearby strikes its first break. JESUS finishes his drink and orders another. EMMETT seems troubled, like something has been weighing heavily on his mind

EMMETT

I don't know about this immortal gig, Jesus.
It seems like every time I try to rest, america
finds a way to conjure back my spirit.

JESUS

You telling me? I've been doing this shit
around the globe for two thousand and twenty years.

EMMETT

Really, man. It's out of control.
They got me on t-shirts, and coffee mugs.
Magazine covers. Hell- I'm doing shows on HBO now!

JESUS

(Downs the rest of his drink.)

Ah, youngin', it comes with the territory.
When Hollywood is knocking, that's
when you know you made it. Your mother
would be proud. They'll never forget about y-

EMMETT

They got me in rap songs, documentaries,
newspaper articles, museums, and arts
exhibits. Even on the internet, they turned on
the white bitch who lied about me whistling
at her?

JESUS

(Laughs. Motions to the bartender nearby
or another round) Yeah, I heard about that.
The big homie downstairs is handling that one!

EMMETT

The historians can't get past me, the painters
re-create different impressions of my fish-food
face. The musicians are the closest ones to
getting it right, and the poets...them fucking poets!

JESUS

(Clearly amused. Ready to hear EMMETT go
into his rant.) Aww, c'mon! Not the poets!
Don't come for the nigga poets, Emmett!

EMMETT

Naw naw! Fuck that! I swear every one of them
negroes who dares to pick up the pen, writes like
I'm the cage that lives stale in their minds.
Like my body parts are the only words that
make it to their pages. (Jesus knods, slightly in
agreeance) And every year, they change my name
too. One year, I'm Eric. The next year, I'm Philando,

The year after that, I'm Trayvon. These days, I'm George.
Most of the time, I'm Tamir.

JESUS

You can't be mad at them, Emmett.
Niggas is still getting killed by the white man.
You are the first made famous of the slain in
america. (finishes his drink) After me, of course.

EMMETT

Nigga! It's all the same. All their poems.
Me, the same nigga with a new name and
face every time.

JESUS

(Signals for another drink. Clearly tipsy.)
Consider it a right of passage. To write about you
is an introduction into the, into the black literary tradition.

EMMETT

(Scoffs.)

The black literary tradition...you ain't hearing a damn
thing I'm saying. I don't know why I even decided
to come here and talk to your black ass.

A BEAT.

JESUS

(Pulls out a cigarette and lights it slowly.
Blows the smoke in EMMETT'S direction.)
You think you the only nigga with a thousand faces?
A thousand names? A thousand lifetimes? A thousand deaths?
There are poems about me in languages that are not
even relevant to modern history. I, too, don't even have
my god-given face no more.

EMMETT

(Sits up, slightly shocked)

Jesus. Man...I didn't mean it like that. I'm sorr-

JESUS

You must think you some special nigga, huh?
(The bartender places another drink in front of him.)
Your mama finds a way to immortalize you in every
Black poet's pen, for generations to come, and you have
the audacity to complain.

EMMETT

All I'm saying is I'm tired, man. I'm fucking *tired*.
This work is exhausting. To manifest everyday in the
Black poet's imagination. To die endlessly without rest.
I feel tortured. Used. Ventriloquized. Idolized.

JESUS

Crucified? Like america's sacrificial lamb? Deified?

EMMETT

I'm a puppet with strings, Jesus! A Frankenstein!
Their only Black boy wonder. Their Prometheus.

JESUS

My dear boy. My precious, precious son.
You and I both know that this is the nature of the game.
To flow ever-present in the river of god.

cont'd on p 24

BAMBDFFEST OFFICIAL PROGRAM SCHEDULE

BAMBDFFEST 2021 International

“The Call” Sunday, **August 1, 1:00am**

“The Call” **11:00am**

Yoga With ShakaJamal
Monday, August 2, 7:00pm

The Lower Bottom Playaz Presents a staged reading of
“Journey of Names” by Will Crossman
Tuesday, August 3, 7:30pm

“Uhuru Film Series” presented by Olu8 Film & Culture
Wednesday, August 4, 11:00am

“Off the Record” podcast with Marvin X
7:00pm

“Live from the Underground-Prohibition Poetry” An
evening of spoken word with Epitome and guest
Friday, August 6, 11:00am

“The Bigger Picture” podcast with Dr. Ayodele Nzinga
6:30pm

Black Arted Film Fest: Bay Area Black QT Filmmakers
presented by the Queer Healing Arts Center in
collaboration with BAMBDFFEST 2021
Saturday, August 7, 9:00am

“From Oakland to the World: Black to Love”
performance and discussion series
Hosted by Kharyshi Wiginton **7:30pm**

Blaq Arted Film Fest: Films by Bay Area Black QT
Artists hosted by Sampson McCormick and Kin
Folkz presented by Queer Healing Arts Center in
Collaboration with BAMBDFFEST 2021
Sunday, August 8, 11:00am

Yoga With ShakaJamal **12:00pm**

Doshe Healing Arts: 21st Century Self Defense With
Sis. Nau~T
Monday, August 9, 11:00am

“Insight National Podcast” w/ Cat Brooks **7:00pm**

The Lower Bottom Playaz Presents a staged reading of
“Riot” by David Tally
Tuesday, August 10, 7:30pm
“Uhuru Film Series” presented by Olu8 Film & Culture
Wednesday, August 11, 11:00am

“Off the Record” podcast with Marvin X **6:00pm**

Blacklit: A Series Of Poetic Conversations presented by
Nomadic Press and BAMBDFFEST 2021
Thursday, August 12, 6:00pm

Black to the Future Writing Workshop with Aries
Jordan
Friday, August 13, 11:00am

“The Bigger Picture” podcast with Dr. Ayodele Nzinga
Saturday, August 14, 9:00am

“From Oakland to the World: Black to Love”
performance and discussion series
Hosted by Kharyshi Wiginton **4:00pm**

“Protected: Envision & Enact: Community Thriving”
presented by the Oakland Asian American Cultural
Center in Collaboration with BAMBDFFEST 2021
7:00pm

The Lower Bottom Playaz presents “Black House” by
Cat Brooks
Sunday, August 15, 11:00am

Yoga With ShakaJamal
Monday, August 16, 11:00am

“Insight National Podcast” w/ Cat Brooks **7:00pm**

The Lower Bottom Playaz presents an evening curated
by “Jangas House” a collective of Black Female Artist
Wednesday, August 18, 11:00am

“Off the Record” podcast with Marvin X **6:00pm**

BAMBDIFEST OFFICIAL PROGRAM SCHEDULE

The Black Laureate Affair presented by Not A Pipeline Publishing, Shuffle Collective and BAMBDIFEST 2021
Thursday, August 19, 4:00pm

Third Thursdays at Latham Square curated by Kev Choice
Friday, August 20, 11:00am

“The Bigger Picture” podcast with Dr. Ayodele Nzinga
5:00pm

A Community Conversation with Dr. Ayodele Nzinga
Saturday, August 21, 9:00am

“From Oakland to the World: Black to Love” performance and discussion series Hosted by Kharyshi Wiginton **7:00pm**

The Lower Bottom Playaz presents “I Am She” by Cat Brooks
Sunday, August 22, 11:00am

Yoga With ShakaJamal **12:00pm**

Doshe Healing Arts: 21st Century Self Defense With Sis. Nau~T **6:00pm**

A Tribute to Huey P Newton
Monday, August 23, 11:00am

“Insight National Podcast” w/ Cat Brooks **7:00pm**

The Lower Bottom Playaz presents “Black House” by Cat Brooks
Tuesday, August 24, 6:00pm

“Black to the Future: Live” presented by BAMBDIFEST 2021
Wednesday, August 25, 11:00am

“Off the Record” podcast with Marvin X **6:00pm**

Conversation Race: A conversation with women of Color Journalists hosted and curated Lisa Gray
Thursday, August 26, 7:00pm

“Tent City” screening and discussion on homelessness and mental health in Oakland
Friday, August 27, 11:00am

“The Bigger Picture” podcast with Dr. Ayodele Nzinga
7:00pm

The Lower Bottom Playaz presents “I Am She” by Cat Brooks
Saturday, August 28, 9:00am

“From Oakland to the World: Black to Love” performance and discussion series Hosted by Kharyshi Wiginton
Sunday, August 29, 11:00am

Yoga with ShakaJamal **7:00pm**

The Lower Bottom Playaz Presents a staged reading of “Journey of Names” by Will Crossman
Monday, August 30, 11:00am

“Insight National Podcast” w/ Cat Brooks **6:00pm**

“New Voices: A reading featuring emerging Writers” presented by Our Voices Our Stories
Tuesday, August 31, 12:33pm

“THE CALL” a community ritual facilitated by Calling up Justice in collaboration with BAMBDIFEST 2021
11:27pm

“THE CALL”
Wednesday, September 1, 12:27am

“THE CALL”

EMMETT

(Finally finishing his drink.) I know. I know.
But I never thought that in life and death,
my nemesis would forever be TIME.

JESUS

(Hiccups.) But if TIME wasn't...how could they
remember?

EMMETT

(Regrettably) But if TIME wasn't...how would they
ever know?

Elsewhere Boy by Martins Deep

Through the chinks in my door, light seeped into my room. Wafting in along with it, the scent of yesterday's neck-laced bodies. I had watched the day break like kolanut in Pa's shaky fingers. A man whose only regret was surviving the Biafran War. The air outside is polluted by stray bullets. It's why we breathe through facemasks.

As I feel for a footsore, I recall last night's dream, the little boy that calls me after a fallen star was tongueless. He came to me by an anthill, and planted a seed in my gunwound—a seed I would later realize was longing—its roots spreading in my chest, my body brimming with an ache that courts a dream. In last night's dream, pain was beautiful, sweeter than the ease of breathing in air not reddened by screams, bodies leaking out libation that scalds the tongues of ancestors, bodies emptied of dreams. I would wake up craving the feeling of being a ghost, being a bird, or the ghost of a dead lark.

Today, I play birdwatcher, so, I bury my catapult at the riverbank. It is another day to color the water green with my envy of birds. I walk into the water bearing the weight of their songs on the tip of my tongue. Birdsong, tender, with notes too fragile to not be shattered from the flashback of yesterday's gunshots. Say, my envy is an ode to what I cannot have. I bear in me a longing that won't beat itself into wings; won't sprout into something that nests in god's beards, sings a hymn to draw water from his blue eyes onto father's farmland. Something without an umbilical cord affixed to a fatherland that rests on a scorpion's breast.

It is the ides of May, and a boy cannot recall the last time he swooped in on the windfall of a shooting star. Perhaps he should stuff his ears when owls lull earth to sleep. I share this body with a girl as beautiful as sin, when it has learnt to seduce mercy. I tell my mother I want elsewhere to fetch her girlhood skin of silk, but what I truly desire is the burial of my country's passport in snow, where in summer, it would blossom into a thornless rose.

Returning home, I heard the police came looking for my older brother, couldn't find him then, instead, led father away. He watched through wisps of the smokescreen he'd puffed from his cigar, father dragged shirtless, his face mirroring the last of draught in his childrens' eyes. My brother tells me the police now make bullets from the mold of boomerangs, so it must find its way home in any body tattooed with a dollar sign.

These days, I walk into ghosts of late uncles, neighbors. They force-feed me maps torn from my geography textbook. I stretch under the shade of our family tree, praying to migratory birds as they fly West of my dreamscape.

atrial septal defect or we must leave this country before my son turns 12

Raina Leon

~
sometimes i fear the casket shroud
will emerge from my own shadow
to greet me smiling with my son's teeth.

this country is such a cruel winter
to black boys singing against ice; it hangs
their songs to clink on snow covered boughs.

my sister's son died & she wore white,
only two months, his heart already broken
in its making. with tamir & ayana & honestie,

black babies in a pandemic of guns & crowns,
i whisper to myself his new name: prophet.
call her grief pure.

a natural end and still a butchering.
sometimes i see him somersaulting in her wake.
& sometimes i fear how my still

new name, *mamma*,
might be written in soot on snow.

~

it was me who held his twin sister's
twisting hands to his before curtains were drawn.
it was me who carried her screaming
from the room to a hospital labyrinth.

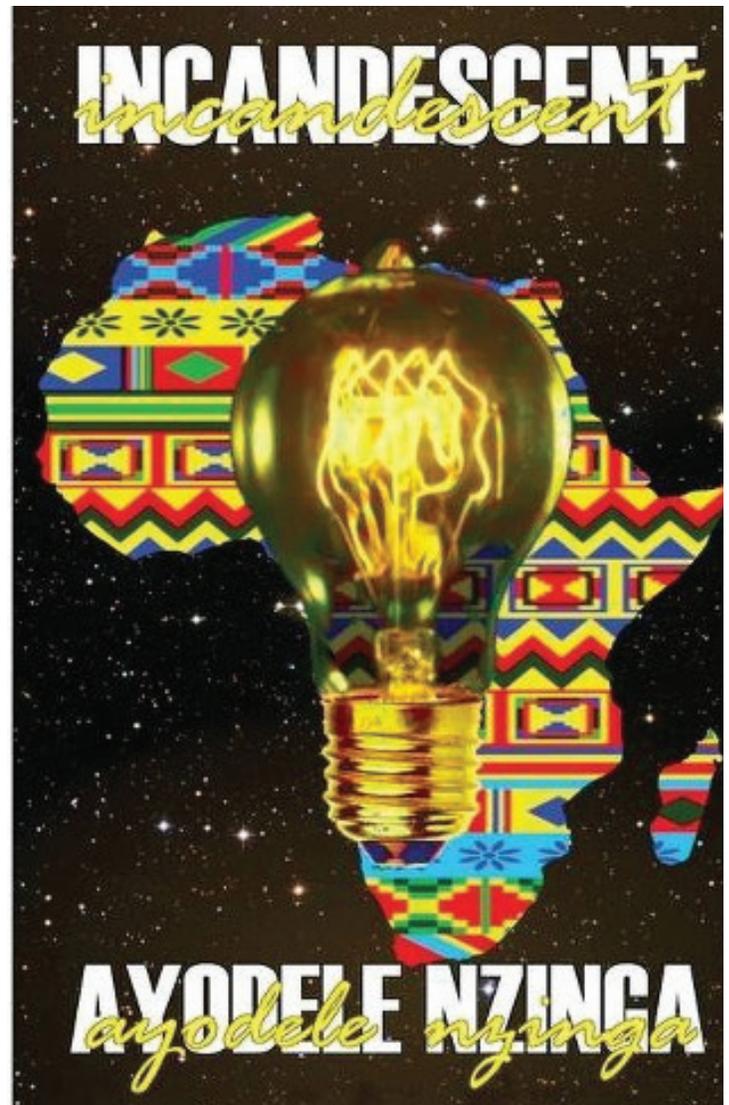
~

his twin is 8 now. their sister is 2,
continuum of earth.
field of gleeful browns.
my son is black & he is parchment in cream.

this northern city has grime and glint
in its racism.

my boy's buttermilk
may save their black
though he is black.
it may not save anyone at all.

am i raising a boy
or what a surgeon might call



vulnus sclopetarium or just
slab with a child

~

by the time i was 8, i could break a jaw into bone spires. i learned to handle a knife in philadelphia: slice quick to splatter an invitation to rubber gloves. i swore they would find me still deadly in shaking sheen if ever a fool would. since my boy was six weeks old, i have folded his hands to chop hangers. combination. jab, jab, cross. block to hide the smile i want to save, even when he was gum & dribble. an elder in a newborn's bib. in germany, three days it took to leave the serrated honing behind. i felt safer in a place of dead crematoriums than my own country.

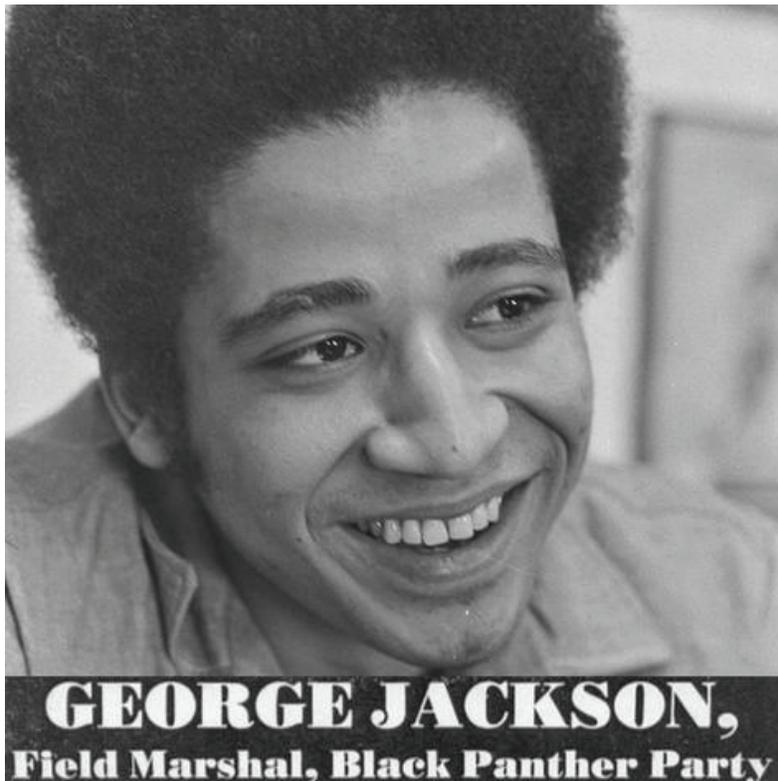
~

if my boy falls to metal, not natural, shard me up, abyss cut water to darkness. if a building stand, it is a lie. a forest of names for empty-eyed women the only real. also, real: this country will kill you if you're not looking and even if you are.

~

mother my god? she asked me
mother? my god.
my god.

Black August: The First Dragon, George Jackson



GEORGE JACKSON,
Field Marshal, Black Panther Party

Daughter Shore

Gia Shakur

Daughters of Hottentot, iron imports from the Horn's mouth / now even a daughter called "Monk" / gathered
in church rows/ lined up at bus stops/ at five in'a morning scrubs and crocs the color of hyssop / dispensing
bandages to the field / still a nhappy head monkey thot/ big city rube / small time hussy / slave to pews / holy
diction / carrying the hush of men / blowback of children thrown as game tokens/ nightlife heifer bar back / bar
exam + working overnight /
haint writhing and cutter hats/ number running / running gunning / pushed a lover down those stairs/ Daughters
prepare the limbs of children / paramores/ the limbs, they shift/ Some dem gone/ the ones that flattened their
face into welcome mats / stacking scythes in their wombs / in the image of Black Madonna / Venus / buoyant
ass / long, dripping nipples / wombs abandoned on serving crystal/ anatomical prototype Daughters of new / no
Daughters who died calling
cock Church Hymn/ listen 'dem praying blues into the mic/
shake dancing under the carnival lights/ Daughters of Shango and Obatala/
god bless the Daughters who throw dice/ folding hair into barrettes/ hand game hand clapping champs/
Daughters who abandoned teeth in the edge of knuckles/ Daughters with teeth steeped and canyoned /
Daughters with jars, pots and cow tongues
hands seasoned in clay and chalk/
Daughters Soapbox, Seed, Junebug
and Monk came to rise the Stungflower

WATCH THEM GATHER AT THE WATER AND EAT
WATCH THEM GATHER AT THE WATER AND EAT
WATCH THEM GATHER AT THE WATER AND EAT



Free Palestine End Apart... by *truthinducedparanoia*

Zazzle

Within Freedom: A Contrapuntal by Sarai Bordeaux

Within Freedom,
I am first and foremost mine.
My needs are met without spending money
or losing my mind.
The money I do spend will stay with us.
Within the community we've built
We celebrate each other's gifts and talents.
We protect each others vulnerabilities
We argue but not to cut deep,
We shoot together.
Our bullets never fly over nothing,
Our knives do not know each other's blood in most part.
We hold fast
We carry on.
Ride together, inter-being, inter-acting.
Not for each others bullshit,
We check that. We know that
It's ok for us to disagree.
We expand in complexity.
This is not a wheels fall off situation.
Checked the wheels
before we left. With
Communication is how im
Doing it now. Boundaries help me
With intimacy.
I need more intimacy in my freedom,
Some of us will not be there
And we are ok with that.
Some of us will have had to go.
This is where the blood on our knives comes in.
We have to protect our young
The young ones within ourselves as well.
This helps us stays together
In spirit
On blocks we own
Leads to land we share
Space we steward,
We retreat
And travel
With one another.
Our understanding of vacation changes
Work has changed
I use my voice differently
We still dream and speak just as loudly sometimes
And sometimes we need not speak at all.
We flow within each other's unspoken languages
Our bodyminds connected.

We have time to go slow
I get to think myself all the way through.
all of the time.
We enjoy one another's complexities.
We are rich in time.
the meaning of life is different.
We have been here all along.
And have uncovered our truest selves.
we are different but we need each other just the same.
We heal our ancestors in this.
our elders taught us this.
Our future kin depends on this.
In freedom.
Each moment contains our past and our futures
In this we remain present.
not as a rejection.
in acceptance
We have made it so far to now.
Right now in freedom
I unravel these truths
Check them against myself
Bruised perception of what I'm doing.
allowed to do.
Take steps to make this freedom my consciousness
My reality.
more than in the moments I steal away.
That is freedom too.
Everything I think freedom is, is a healing.
Meaning
Just. That.
in these poems too.
These poems are maps and blueprints too.
I can get free as long as we all get free.
As long as I spill off the page
As long as this process
Leads to being about
taking that action.
In the space we are stealing to heal
We are taking our freedom
Taking our power too.
turning it into power that turns these wildest dreams
in my mind
Until there aren't moments or dreams anymore
Until in freedom I am first mine
And my needs are met without having to spend.
on a dime.
Within Freedom, I'd get to keep my body and my mind.

Crossings by Karla Brundage

How many times have we crossed this Atlantic
How many times our souls have flown
How many times have we crossed this Pacific
What is it that we might not have known?

I look into the ocean for spirits of those
Who did not make the crossing
I look to the sea for the answers hidden in castles
A church above a dungeon below

Sankofa, protector of African people
Your drum combats evils practices of this world
Great bird, you flew with us, to take our spirits home
To make the first of all the great migrations

There will be no freedom without great sacrifice
And there is only one goal of freedom

*millions of Africans shipped to the New World
in the Atlantic slave
we were traded, purchased, kidnapped
we were sold or traded for raw materials
by companies or groups of investors
a time of in-betweenness, the "Middle Passage"
An estimated 15% of the Africans died at sea
An estimated 2 million of the Africans died at sea,
An estimated 60 million African would die as a result of the slave trade*

How many times have we crossed this Atlantic
How many times our souls have flown
How many times have we crossed this Pacific
What is it that we might not have known?

I look into the ocean for spirits of those
Who did not make the crossing
How many times have we crossed this ocean?
Great Bird, take our spirits home

Ayo and Bambdfest



Accessing Excess by Ashia Ajani

Goddamn! Baby you lookin' so fresh to death

What you finna do? Where you goin with all that gas?

Illustrious immaculate blk- ooowweeee! *Nigga I'm tryna get like you*, sew a whole seance to my gown and retrieve forgotten gossip in silk and sateen of Biblical proportions! O' my gorgeous glittering Gods of goodlooks all grown: I mean, have you ever tasted sweetness from the source? It's almost enough to make a nigga hop a flight and go back to where loves him best: niggas doowopping a silk press, aloe dipped loc, creases so sharp, starched to a soldier's salute, return to a mouth of embodied pleasure, an adornment ordained by centuries of hand me down joy, but Bitch! Soon as that stimmy hit I drown myself in debauchery

Look quick!

I'm a bead on Serena's hair at the 1998 US Open

I'm the gold in yo granny's teeth

I'm Smino's opal grill smoking swisher sweets

I'm decadence for the sake of decadence alone!

Yes, me and my niggas be ungovernable/unquenchable Over the top, extra, indulgent, so wedded to the concept of beauty our wayward fantasies too grandiose to ever be appreciated by the colonial machine of our scarcity myth nightmares

Lord, look how we glow even in our grief--

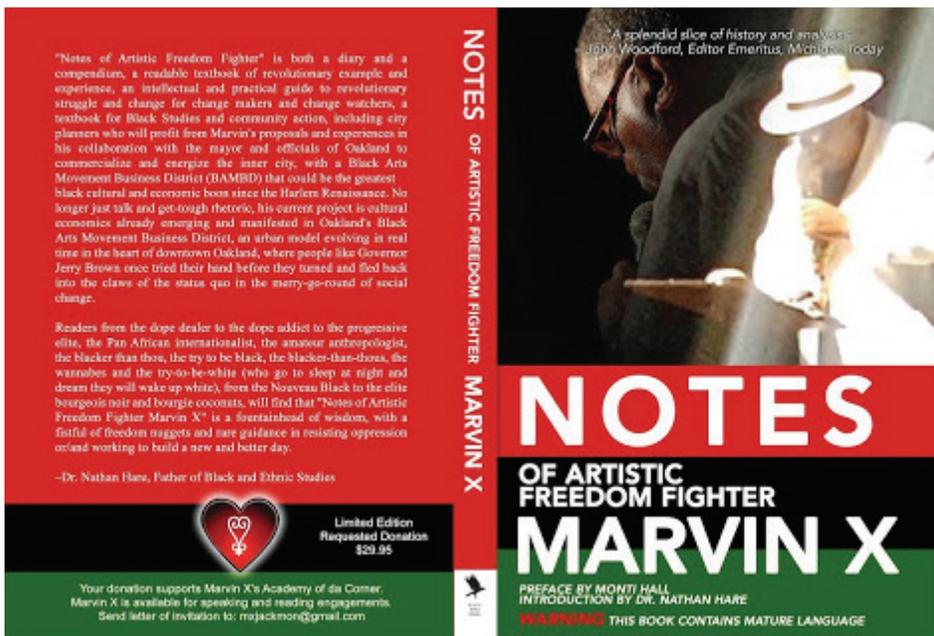
Baby, you can't clock this crease!

Never doubt a nigga and a paycheck, a nigga and an advent speaking all that is gaudy and sensual and demanding "I am here, I am aching to be seen"

True, I am extravagant - and folks say niggas don't care about the environment like my feet ain't planted somewhere, like I ain't a product of transfer, transmutation, ecological restructuring these fast fashion bogeys don't mean nothing to me, y'all gon ahead Imma keep my fabrics I've earned my keep, could teach you more about sustainability than you could ever sermonize

Cut from a different cloth, so I be

holding good flesh, just yearning to be free.



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Parent Company: Black Bird Press



(Artist: Julia Mallory)

A List of Justified Longings (DeShara Suggs-Joe)

I long for my head to stay
attached to my body. I long
not to be an elegy,
yet. I long for something
better than this, a sparkly universe
not yet discovered for me
& my homegirls, my momma
& even my daddy if he acts
right. I long for joy that waits
outside my homies' window
like an unearthed sun. I long for
our owed dollars & flowers to rain,
to flood. But mostly, I long,
& I long to stop longing, to stop
doing this, here, that feels like begging.
I long for a favorable resolve,
but if not, a gun or machete,
something sharp enough
to puncture flesh. I long,
for blood but not ours
this time. I long for something
more productive than a timeline
of dead bodies: *save our girls, say her
name, **all black lives matter.***

Honestly, I long for my voice
to just be my voice & not
a messenger for Black death or
a rolodex of our disregarded blood

COMING SOON

THE WILD CRAZY RIDE OF THE
MARVIN X EXPERIENCE

VIDEO DOCUMENTARY

A Worker's History
OF THE BLACK ARTS MOVEMENT

produced and directed

by

MARVIN X

Edited by Ken Johnson



Chasing Waterfalls (Julia Mallory)

A month after my 17 year old son's earthly shell joined his spirit, I was up in the mountains chasing waterfalls with a man I loved but had not yet told. I needed a body of water to baptize my grieving being into. An experience to remind me that I was not numb, that my heart, while broken, was a mosaic, reflecting light and still beating in my chest. Some describe child loss as an unyielding emptiness. Yet, I found myself on the other end of the spectrum—filled with every present and dormant emotion. The grief taking residence in my nerves, turning them bad and heavy.

I'd wake up nearly unable to move after having the most vivid dreams of the dead that were not mine to claim or the living that I could not claim. Some days I'd submit to the weight of the grief—laying in the bed until its stronghold lessened.

I was ready to surrender to the healing balm of the water.

Before our trek to the unfamiliar, I walked to the river I know under the ripe July sky. Resting on a bench, I attract a solo, ochre ladybug. The most ladybugs I ever saw at one time swarmed us on Alabama red clay outside my granddaddy's funeral. Conversations with near strangers doubling as relatives, the ladybugs dripping from their Sunday's Best. Lord knows, we all needed that good luck after 18 hours by Club Wagon from up north. Out in the

middle of somebody's somewhere, the indigo sky wrapped around the spirit of the trees. Looking like there were souls trapped in the stars. My ancestors winking at me.

Two hours later in a place where the deer do what they want, we make a short trek from the car and find, tucked between trees, our piece of loaned oasis. The leaves are abundant and welcomed covering in the July heat. We encounter a massive wall of visible roots belonging to a flowering tree on our way to the mouth of the falls. Scaling the ancient rocks at its base, I make it to the top and roll the thick, emerald foliage between my thumbs. Reminding me of the lush patch of ivy that used to exist in front of my house. Its leaves, waxy and thick.

Each season, it defied the odds. I didn't think it capable of dying. Until the poison ivy came, a botanical chameleon, masterful at blending in until revealed by the changing seasons. Simple excavation nearly impossible, its roots attempting to dominate the ivy while its leaves an umbrella, shading the sun's favor. I failed to protect it from the charming, colorful intruder. The ivy would eventually starve from my neglect.

*

I navigate the thick roots of the tree and find myself atop the rocks again. I feel a song in my spirit and I lift my hands to the heavens and slice the air in half with my hips. Joy still present in this weary body. No one calls this joy obscene to my face and yet it looms in the air like a nuisance I don't bother to swat away. Many survivors of tragedy often grapple with feeling underserving of happiness. Daily, I am absolving myself of these complicated negotiations.

Atop the opening of a stream that feeds the waterfall, we balance our bodies on nature's footstools, our feet parallel above the cool see-through spring. The chilly vapors kissing the soles of our feet—the icy water passing through our toes until our feet are numb. He unpacks his singing bowl—my first time seeing one in person—the wand circulating the perimeter and sending healing vibrations. Always teaching me things—opening my mind and my heart.

I only want to kiss you under the waterfall.

We cross another stream and climb a small hill to get close to the rapid white water, its lush flow, painting the rocky backdrop onyx. I am preparing to capture this moment on our camera phones. I get an epic shot—him beneath the water, wrist slowly curving the singing bowl with its wand. His locks catching the breeze from the force of the water's spray. A spray that smells like after it rains—after the earth beats the dust from its pores.

This can't be northeast Pennsylvania. This can't be weeks after my son's death. This can't be how we will fall in love—the water baptizing us in possibility. When we make an anniversary trip a year later with my youngest son in tow, I will stand beneath the falls for the first time, letting the water wash over me like we have a natural understanding. Inviting my baby boy, timid and disinterested, to join me. His big brother would have covered him in courage and guided him to the center.

Bro, c'mon. Quit being scared. Igotchu. Weaintdothat. Uh-uh.

*

On our way back to the car, we encounter more Black folks. *I see you.* Their glances signifying relief that they aren't the only ones that have made the trip. We encourage their exploration; our smiles a testament to the haven we have found.

*

The summer sun rides low behind the clouds as we ride home listening to two decade-old rap music, mostly Pac and UGK—the lyrics, a witness—hitting me in the deepest pit of my stomach:

*my man BoBo just lost his baby in a house fire
And when I got on my knees that night to pray
I asked God "Why you let these killas live and take my homeboy's son away?"*

I am not yet in a place of tallying up other folks' grace but when I do, these words will soon return to me over and over again. I turn my love's hand over in mine, nostalgia warming our palms. We went chasing waterfalls, surrendering to their beauty and perfect power when grief relinquished its grip.

Falling apart. Falling in place. Falling...

insomni-black (Raihana Haynes-Venerable)

*“Maybe I’m an insomni-black
Bad sleep triggered by bad government”
— Noname*

I’m trying to remember a time when I was able to sleep
soundly, or a time when my brain would quiet
when my eyes were no longer taking in light.
Now, in my dreams I am simply body,
disembodied mouth, severed mind unattached
from spine.

I dream in grays.
When I recall them I try to add in colors
but no shade of blue fits the sky just right.
I’m scared of the muted worlds my unconscious mind constructs.
Afraid those worlds might be infectious,
like a disease spreading into the parts of my brain
where hope fashions utopias

At night, I am sifting through memory
an american timeline unfolds and refolds itself
in my periphery and I search for myself inside
the muddled pieces.

Somewhere inside my dreams I wanted to believe america could —
see me, love me, desire me, want me, hear me, feel me, feel me.

I dreamt myself into a textbook where slavery was “not so bad” - where masters were friends - where beatings
were affectionate - where stealing children - where sliced up, stripped apart, shattered families - where drownings
for insurance money - weren’t layed out - were obscured - were omitted - weren’t made real.

Real when my mind is reliable,
before memory morphs into fractured phantoms
for you, birthplace, home, homeland, land of the free, land of democracy.

Did you know about the *souvenirs*?
serial killer shit
the finger-bones, the charred penises,
the skin transformed into leather shoes,
death-picnics
written deep in the tissue, the fissures between the muscles,
slithering through the marrow

You’ve told me time and again
that I fit inside you, that I belong here in this place,
that we are meant to melt in this pot where you have
ground me into sediment at the bottom of this primordial soup.

Nightmares so vivid mixtures of past and present
children blur into one another — Till/Tamir
and that comparison's been made but must me swallowed
like a horse pill stuck in the throat.

Nightmares so vivid I pound my head
against the wall at night become
concussed, consumed, constituted, constitution,
consummation, cons, conning me and mine.

Imprinted from birth inescapable connection to the ideological
the *freedom* & the glory & the greatest & the winners & the strong & the brave & the defense & the wealth & the
leaders & the trailblazers & the innovators & what is the poem if not the release, the rejection, of such an inscription,
of such a lie?

A child was gunned down in a park and I can't sleep
A woman's baby snatched from her at the border and I can't sleep
A man is hung from a tree and I can't sleep
america will be here when I wake up so I can't sleep

in the beginning was the word and the word was with god and the word was god — john 1:1

Aremu Adebisi

they were first [sojourners] [travellers] [explorers] [wayfarers] [snowbirds] [sunseekers] [fill in with your word] before
they claimed to be [tourists] [road romanticists] [guests] [visitors] [lovers of people (barbaric)] [fill in with your word]
which they did when they returned after a brief spell of [departure] [sampling] [lust] [observation] [lips-smacking] [ev-
erything-is-naked-and-golden-here] [fill in with your word]. no doubts, they returned with all their [feelings] [worries]
[circumstances] and [beliefs] with all their [properties] [goods] and [bundles] their [smacking mattresses] [smashing
mistresses] [knocking metals] all of their [animals] all of their [blitz] [fusillade] and [bombardments] [fill in with your
word]— all the while claiming to be [tourists—and all of the above and your word].

my ancestors must have wondered what tourist visits hefting his [house] and [neighbourhood] carrying [guns] and
[rifles] marching in [battalions] [desecrating] the [gods] and [deities] with all of [his expected benefits] his [mistresses'
benefits] his future [wife's benefits] his unborn [child's benefits] his [mayor's] his [pastor's] his [monarch's]— all locked
inside his [peace] sealed from [prying eyes]— except there was the [desire] to [stay] [plunder] and [never return] to
their [homeland]. soon they were [colonists] [ruddy slave-masters] [land-holders] [neocolonists] [imperialists] [fill in
with your word] and would fight tooth and nail to never be addressed [plunderers] [purloiners] [exploiters] [everything
thievery and your word].

they own [the word] and might decide to call themselves [anything] they feel like and might decide to call us upon
whom has been forced [the word] [anything] they feel like. so [i fight] over [the word] to [learn] to [survive] to [forge]
myself into a [weapon] to [put] meals on my table, on my [mother's table] and to [pray] to the [foreign god] [fiercely],
[adopting] his [conquests] over the [black deities]. so [i learn] the [patterns] and [components] of [the word] of the
[plunderers] the [hypocrites] to [stay upright] and [ideal] and [responsible] and [honest] and [loyal] and full of [integ-
rity]. so [i learn] the [intricacies] of [the word] its [etymologies] [bruising meanings] [subtle supremacies] to [unlearn]
[my black tongue] [my blank tongue] [my inkblot tongue] [my hoar- covered tongue] [my ruined-temple tongue] and
[adopt] the language of the white [to be saved from him]. so [i write] with [the word] as [unnatural], as [feigning-white]
as i can and [i am a retard] in a black school ruled by [english flags] in a country where [every black accent snows] and
[i write] like a 7yo english girl who is yet to learn [the word] [thoroughly], except that she was born into it.

Flames

Cat Brooks

If you're going to burn America
Then burn
I am weary of waiting

And I don't mean these piddly brush fires popping up in urban centers in the aftermath of rage and protest

I mean
uncontrollable,
unstoppable,
Intentional...

flames...

Determined to turn injustice into ash
To burn this system to the ground
And make way for something else
Anything
else
Anything
but this

I'm tired of being spit on
Shit on
Lied to
Lynched



Let the Flames burn
Flames that cannot be outted by threats of arrest or martial law
Cause we're not scared of that no more
Cause nothing is scarier than waking up and walking each and every day

Black

in America

If you claim these are your streets, my people
Then take them
And refuse to give them back
Until every life they have stolen from us is accounted for
Is avenged
Until their names roll off the tongues of your countrymen like their pledge of allegiance to this country that wont
stop killing us

Yet demands our loyalty, our labor and our love

She ...
America...
This great democracy
is the narcissistic abuser who manipulates and mindfucks;
artfully gaslighting us into believing that our lived reality
is fantasy
made up in the minds of those discontented for no reason

Nevermind it remains open season

On niggas
And negresses

Daily

Stop with the meager threats of interrupting business as usual

And make the new business
the constant beat of revolution

We've marched
We've prayed
We've voted
We've protested
We've contested
We've sang and danced and organized and advocated

And today

Today we are told that holes in walls matter more than holes shot through a sleeping Black woman's body in her own goddamn home

Once again it is affirmed that the following things are a crime while Black:

- Breathing
- Living
- Walking
- Loving
- Resting
- Working
- Shopping
- Driving
- Texting
- Talking
- Eating
- Sleeping
- Sleeping
- Sleeping

Sleeping is a crime if you're Black, female, educated, employed and
sleeping ...
peacefully
... next to your love

Anything
And I do mean
ANYTHING
that
ANYONE else -

not Black of course -
But
ANYONE else
does
every single day -
when done by us -
is ...

justified causation for our bloodspill

And still
They want folks like me to
Still ...

The waters

But today I say

Let the waters boil
Let the dams break

Let the streets flood

And not with our blood
But with our resistance and insistance
Our resilience and our brilliance

This shit stops
Today

Let the people be more fearful of continuing to live this way
Than standing for our freedom
And whatever consequences that may bring

Sing the warrior songs of our ancestors
Beat drums for medicine to carry us into battle
Say prayers to Nat and Harriet and Huey
To Fannie and to Ida

Ask them for guidance
And
forgiveness
Cause it never should have got this far
We let too much shit slide
Too many of our loved ones die
And instead of fight
We've cried
Easier to absorb their lies
Than bring about their demise

But its time
Been time
Beyond time

Im protecting whats mine
And suggest you do the same
The change
You put on them signs
Aint coming without sacrifice

Are you ready?
Are you willing?
Are you ...

Black
Tired
Mad
Done
Ready?

Ready for it to burn.

Are you ready for ...

Flames.

As part of BAMBDFEST 2021, BlackLit brings together 10 Nomadic Press writers and 2 musicians who have been paired up in poetic conversations weeks prior to the event. This is a fundraiser for the Nomadic Press Black Writers Fund (we have a short goal of raising \$2,000 by the end of the evening).

At Nomadic Press we are proud of our recent work to support Black writers through our initiative, the Nomadic Press Black Writers Fund (NPBWF), and we'd like to thank those who have contributed to the fund. Our mission is to level the playing field for Black writers.



Pandemic Ode: A Partial Prayer

Michal “MJ” Jones

Praise be to solitude silence.

Praise be to steam's ascent through grate's clenched teeth, to
outstretched knees that hop over.

Praise be to corner store bodegas stocking single roll toilet paper.

Praise be to pure lungs.

Praise be to love & its discovery under overturned & broken stone.

Praise the butterfly wings &

whistled winds which carry them. Praise be to my son's curl pattern
& nap [3 hours down].

Praise be to the loctician-turned-therapist

disintegrating worry with strong hands at scalp; praise be to the scalp & kitchen
the thick of it pulled in lover's grip.

Praise be to sidewalk graffiti sprawl: LOVE IS MONEY.

Praise be to fixed mortgages & rent control.

Praise be to bob & weave wheelie poppin scraper bikes blessing Lake Merritt
with bronze & tin sunrays.

Praise the 5 paper white pelicans in synchronized syncopated swim;

Amen to their squad goals.

Praise be to the 18 bus &

to Green Naked Ladies' blurring route's landscape.

Praise be to the awning –

its voluptuous curvature;

Praise the teeth grazing teat, scrape scream & shout Lord's name in vain,

Praise the tight tunnel collapse around fingers.

Praise be to the sideshow

& skid marks tires burn & singe;

Praise be to Oakland's breathing ghosts. Praise be to
Sinaloa; to the white Goldilocked creature standing barefoot
in its parking lot; praise the shit talk & cut up within earshot.

Praise be to poets who know it & poets who don't.

Praise be to ugly ducklings who stay that way.

Praise be to threaded brows; fluorescent hair; sundresses & golden wing ear cuffs.

Praise be to guitars & bodies

after their shape, supple for strum.

Praise be to skunk

seeping outta every low parked car on this block.

Praise be to the tents sandbagging the city streets;

to stakes that hold them down; to the masked

unwavering handing out hygiene & nutrition.

Praise be to black trans praise dancers; to electrified
prayer hands.

Praise the cities of refuge.

Praise this sea of black & brown worshippers whirring still air into sandstorm.

Praise be to the uncontrolled organist; to peach cobbler;

to jumpin shoutin cryin. Praise be to the shimmering wave of fans
preparing for flight.

Praise be to unnamed spirit. Praise be to

altar; to those not here; to the exiled.

Praise the leaps & weeps of faith; the rocking in arms' cradle & holler.

Praise be to tilled soil;

to grape vines; to jasmine. Praise be to indigoes & violets;

to the color purple.

Praise be to our skin & its basement organs; to belly's wax & wane.

Praise be to the elemental.
Praise the body & its stardust; the tear's cleansing saltwater.
Praise be to remembrance &
to release when memory grows anvil.
Praise be to Harvest moon bathwaters; to balm of a mother's sweet song.
Praise be to incantation, to utterance.
Praise be to the elemental.
Praise be to diaspora; to
calloused hands & hearts thumping on in defiance.
Praise be to defiance. Praise be to hummingbird's flight.

BAMBD FEST & OAKLAND MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA PRESENT

Black to the Future (live)

AUGUST 24TH
6:00PM - 8:00PM

OAKLAND MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA
1000 OAK ST, OAKLAND, CA 94607

A private viewing through Mothership: Voyage Into Afrofuturism
Wine & small plates & an evening of literary & musical excursions.

Featuring :

Ayodele Nzinga, Poet Laureate Oakland
Tongo Eisen-Martin, Poet Laureate San Francisco
Ciera Jevae, Poet Laureat Richmond
Mia Pixley, Cellist

Only 100 tickets @ \$60.00 ea. in advance
\$75.00 at the door

www.onthestage.tickets/show/the-lower-bottom-playaz

Parking for the event in museum garage:
Flat rate: \$7.00

BAMBD FEST.COM



ARTWORK BY THEARTHUR WRIGHT | THEARTHURWRIGHT.NET
DESIGN BY TASIN SABIR | TASINSABIR.COM

basquait's revenge

Mimi Tempestt

i'm just a fat black bitch with a few good words
a court jester at best
every black poet waits in line for their 15 minutes
regurgitating the last one's sonnet into a lackluster spinoff

every black man's poem reads:

i was killed today

i will be killed again tomorrow

america, you wish to consume or wear or fuck or frame my flesh

america, you were never america in the first place

let us swallow our fists until the bruising bears resemblance

of a broken chain

i am never at your mercy

they calculate every move
hovering to see if the academy gon' take the soul outta me
as if i didn't sell it already in a los angeles basement

//in exchange for a simple day

2016 got a few secrets on me

the devil got even more

i am imperfect

in the most perfect ways

no idealism penetrates the perilous nature of my pen

i see the southpaw stance of their spoken word

from a mile away

i prefer an unorthodox rendering of my wicked tongue

a fading table sketch of an early basquiat
turned calamity from a violent cadence

a sicko's mind fuck

how far left can i take god's third eye

let's see:

a portrait:

my latinx cousin smoking meth in the bathroom.

in the room over her toddler watches a gay cartoon

a landscape:

my african friend begging for my hand in marriage

for citizenship in a country he's doesn't even want to die in

a still life:

of my third abortion. no...my fourth.

graffiti:

the line of coke i snorted the night before i moved to oakland

i play god always
i'm as godless as i paint myself to be

the black woman's poem reads:
*i was raped today
i will be raped again tomorrow
america, you wish to consume and wear and fuck and frame my flesh
america, you were always america in the first place
let us swallow our blood until the bruising bears resemblance of a broken chain
i am always at your mercy*

they calculate every move

hovering to see if the loneliness gon' take the poetry outta me

as if i didn't offer everything in a florida graveyard

//in exchange for a killer's aim

this the second time you read that stanza

in the last piece

i refused to bleed

on this page

bleeding is the only thing

that seems worthy of your applause

mimi, you're screaming at the walls again

mimi, just shut up and do the work

mimi, play nice

&

maybe your 15 minutes

will last longer

than the nigga ahead of you

the chip on my shoulder gotta death wish

the arrogance
can't even hide

itself

it removed my head

from the body

& placed it off center

left on the canvas

the eyes dilate

lava hot

a whispering window

shot up from
skull

crack(ed) dances

into the yellowing
of the teeth

a cigarette spawns

the tall-tale sign

too good for this willowing scene

vibrating in opposition

to the onslaught reverberation

safety tantalizes for

luxury

i'm almost bourgeois bored

the reality is if i don't hear the slit

of wrist

transposed through

the paint

then what are we really dying for?

to be representational?

i forget to be here

all the time

GROUNDED JUST ISN'T MY THING

it's the ones who

prance proper

holy

who got the viciousness

begging

to crawl

naked

completely out of their skin

me?

every wall

was already

taken

every seedling

of

doubt

was planted

into

a forest

decaying my wandering

thoughts

into a new beginning

let's see how pretty

i can make

this frown

look today

HOOD ROULETTE

Zouhair Mussa

*“God shapes you
And through it
You shape god”*

*“You ask god to protect you
and the weapon on your hip”*

“You ask god to protect you as you proceed to sin”

*“N’ when god gives you the
strength, you fight”*

*Are you fallen angel? Or repentant demo-*bang**

Walking out the gates of my house

Prayer beats down my chest
Dice game past my left shoulder

Hoop shoes in my right hand
Bullet shells at my feet

Anger pounding against my chest
Stoppin me from breathing

Pleadin to be released
Heating my eyeballs into a red hue

Feeding into the image of an angry black boy
From the inner city
Who cant find joy today

The veins on my neck scream for help
as I exchange punches with the air

Fighting

this invisible enemy

Sad to say I've adapted to rage

N everyday I wake I thank the most high
Cuz I know how they get down outside

I was 5 when they murdered Oscar Grant for takin that Bart ride

Popos throwin
55 shots for dozin off in a car

Then try to spin blocks wit a badge actin hard

Then the kid I grew up wit cop a glock
Cuz he jus playin his cards

No time to cock just spray to save his life
And he end up in a prison yard

N that girl I grew up with turned up missing

For police to search they can't afford
They too busy Guerilla trickin'

N
Family still
never came back home from that grave
And I still
can't process that pain right

So my mental
get to messin wit me when I try to sleep at night

In the midst of this war outside
A residence torn apart by
cracked roads
riddled with potholes
bigger than the sidewalk

To bullet holes
chokin black and brown bodies

Crack Rock got
Cracked out elderly convinced
they index finger turned shotty

EVERY HOOD GOT DEATH WRITTEN ON IT
FROM WEST OAKLAND KILLA 20S
TO
MURDER DUBS OVER EAST
TO
GASKILL UP NORTH
I WONDER WHO TRYNA KILL US OFF SO BAD?

I was 6
when It really settled in
that someday we all gotta die

I learned to stay quiet n play my part

But now the silence is ripping me to shreds

I just pray the day my name becomes dearly departed

it's not on the end of a viral video hashtag
Or a hot shell

-

-

But on a prayer mat
uttering god's words
tryna find an escape from this curse
of dead or herse before 18

The way I see the world
You can not see unless you lived this hell and know it well

That's why the majority blind
They only see with they eyes

They got no reference to feel

My heart screams the names of the fallen
With a slight hope that someone hears this pain

I wish my present was my past tense
N every second I'm questioning my own actions

Do I take a right at this block or keep it lit?

..Do I drop this fight or exercise my right to whoop his ass?
Decisions fighting in my head

“Hood” roulette

..The wrong head nod...

...The wrong hand shake..

...The wrong path I walk down...

...The wrong route home...

Can leave me bleeding out on the sidewalk past curfew

...Like I aint kno no better than to play with the hood like that...

...Police Like that

God, as I walk out the house today
I pray you keep me sa- *bang*

in the beginning was the word and the word was with god and the word was god — john 1:1

Aremu

Adebisi

they were first [sojourners] [travellers] [explorers] [wayfarers] [snowbirds] [sunseekers] [fill in with your word] before they claimed to be [tourists] [road romanticists] [guests] [visitors] [lovers of people (barbaric)] [fill in with your word] which they did when they returned after a brief spell of [departure] [sampling] [lust] [observation] [lips-smacking] [everything-is-naked-and-golden-here] [fill in with your word]. no doubts, they returned with all their [feelings] [worries] [circumstances] and [beliefs] with all their [properties] [goods] and [bundles] their [smacking mattresses] [smashing mistresses] [knocking metals] all of their [animals] all of their [blitz] [fusillade] and [bombardments] [fill in with your word]— all the while claiming to be [tourists—and all of the above and your word].

my ancestors must have wondered what tourist visits hefting his [house] and [neighbourhood] carrying [guns] and [rifles] marching in [battalions] [desecrating] the [gods] and [deities] with all of [his expected benefits] his [mistresses' benefits] his future [wife's benefits] his unborn [child's benefits] his [mayor's] his [pastor's] his [monarch's]— all locked inside his [peace] sealed from [prying eyes]— except there was the [desire] to [stay] [plunder] and [never return] to their [homeland]. soon they were [colonists] [ruddy slave-masters] [land-holders] [neocolonists] [imperialists] [fill in with your word] and would fight tooth and nail to never be addressed [plunderers] [purloiners] [exploiters] [everything thievery and your word].

they own [the word] and might decide to call themselves [anything] they feel like and might decide to call us upon whom has been forced [the word] [anything] they feel like. so [i fight] over [the word] to [learn] to [survive] to [forge] myself into a [weapon] to [put] meals on my table, on my [mother's table] and to [pray] to the [foreign god] [fiercely], [adopting] his [conquests] over the [black deities]. so [i learn] the [patterns] and [components] of [the word] of the [plunderers] the [hypocrites] to [stay upright] and [ideal] and [responsible] and [honest] and [loyal] and full of [integrity]. so [i learn] the [intricacies] of [the word] its [etymologies] [bruising meanings] [subtle supremacies] to [unlearn] [my black tongue] [my blank tongue] [my inkblot tongue] [my hoar-covered tongue] [my ruined-temple tongue] and [adopt] the language of the white [to be saved from him]. so [i write] with [the word] as [unnatural], as [feigning-white] as i can and [i am a retard] in a black school ruled by [english flags] in a country where [every black accent snows] and [i write] like a 7yo english girl who is yet to learn [the word] [thoroughly], except that she was born into it.