



POETIC ADDRESS TO THE NATION 2017

EVERY YEAR, THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND CULTURE SPONSORS THE **PEOPLE'S STATE OF THE UNION**, inviting us all to host a national conversation in our own homes, schools, houses of worship, and community organizations, sharing stories that reveal the state of our union. Then we invite poets to be inspired by hundreds of stories submitted from across the country, collaboratively composing the *Poetic Address to the Nation*. The 2017 Poetic Address performance takes place at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco on Saturday, March 11; it will be recorded and streamed live by Free Speech TV.

THE POETIC ADDRESS PROCESS

The *2017 Poetic Address to the Nation* is informed by stories shared at People's State of the Union community events and by individuals across the country in late January-early February 2017. Working in partnership with the USDAC, the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts commissioned a group of poets from across the U.S. to contribute poems on the state of our union. Some also wrote story poems inspired by stories uploaded to the [#PSOTU2017 Story Portal](#).

The Poetic Address to the Nation may be downloaded, shared, and performed freely, so long as acknowledgement is given to the USDAC and poets cited.

PARTICIPATING POETS

Cam Awkward, Tongo Eisen-Martin, Shira Erlichman, Bob Holman, Marc Bamuthi Joseph, Geoff Kagan-Trenchard, Michelle Lee (Mush), Luis J. Rodriguez, Naudika Williams, and Yolanda Wisher.

THE USDAC

The USDAC is a network of artists, activists, and allies inciting creativity and social imagination to shape a culture of equity, empathy, and belonging.

We affirm the right to culture and pursue cultural democracy that:

- welcomes each individual as a whole person
- values each community's heritage, contributions, and aspirations
- promotes caring, reciprocity, and open communication across all lines of difference
- dismantles all barriers to love and justice.



CONTACT US

Ask for more help or information anytime. If you perform the Poetic Address, please send us a picture and/or a note about how it went: hello@usdac.us.

TOGETHER, WE CREATE.

USDAC.US | HELLO@USDAC.US

2017 POETIC ADDRESS TO THE NATION

YGB THE POEM

by Hodari Davis, Feb. 29, 2013

These are songs
Written for Black children to sing
Elegies to a forgotten past
These are poems
Written in honor of those
Warriors, Freedom fighters, Artists, Ancestors
Determined to put things in the mouths
And minds. And hearts, And souls of our people
These words are mantras for late night meditation
Meant to be dreamed And memorized
Recited and performed
These are lessons
Meant to be taught In real time
The making of heroes Requires repetition
The making of Sheroes Requires consistency Requires reciprocity
Culture
To save ourselves
We must save them
You must save us
We must save you
Requires awareness
Acceptance
Actual application of
What we know is right
Out of the mouths of babies
You gotta do better
We must expect
Better for you
For ourselves
We cannot become
The wretched of the earth
The Forgotten victims of our own under education
Willing slaves feeding a system bent on our annihilation
These songs are written for us
So we survive another generation
We cannot afford to not know the words

FREEDOM

by Bob Holman

FREEDOM to put lima beans and black-eyed peas together
FREEDOM to take off BB King's watch
FREEDOM to shout "Let's hit it" on every Other beat
FREEDOM to look at everybody whenever you want with a nod and a tie-yr-shoes
FREEDOM to not shut up, Ever
FREEDOM of press-ure points
FREEDOM of speech-ifyng poetics tralalalalolotratalalalala
FREEDOM of lemonade
FREEDOM to remember what you are doing in Montana
FREEDOM to adjust the height of the floor
FREEDOM to eat an all-poetry diet
FREEDOM to not write the poem, write the Other poem
FREEDOM to the second guy from the left
FREEDOM of the f-bomb when appropriate and when inappropriate, well,
 that's up to you
FREEDOM for a march to be omnidirectional and you might not even be able to move
FREEDOM to turn off reality, and it ain't on TV, bud
FREEDOM of Neanderthal, we all are
FREEDOM of rulers to measure backwards
FREEDOM of antique roadshow blowback
FREEDOM to sneeze with no "bless you"'s
FREEDOM to scratch somebody else's itch
FREEDOM to go home again, again
FREEDOM to land a helicopter in the yard at Angola Prison and just see what happens
FREEDOM to knit some pink pussy ears on Trump Tower (with a mighty roar)
FREEDOM to love everybody's body simultaneously
FREEDOM for the Freedom Riders to finally be able to get off the damn bus
FREEDOM to shout stop at the top of your lungs in the stock market: "STOP!"
FREEDOM to take a cellphone to court
FREEDOM to get back on the horse, knowing you are also the horse
FREEDOM of Omnis Animus Unam: All One Animal
FREEDOM of thoughtless behavior to reanimate itself as a suspension bridge leading to
 a new consciousness that continues to invent itself until everyone crosses
 over and no tolls either
FREEDOM

UNTITLED POEM

by Hadeel Ramadan

1.

i am sitting on my red couch
imagining it blood

eyes shot

i have never felt this tired before

2.

the state of israel is george zimmerman crying over a knot on his head
with a 9 millimeter in his hand and a bloody black boy at his feet

3.

i wonder how gasoline tastes
inside of the body

how quickly a cleansing can turn to a burning

rip us from our space in the earth

but these roots are so
bothersome

sothick

& maddening
how do they keep growing back
these weeds

4.

there is a scarecrow bleeding, 4 miles out of Damascus

hay sprouts from his neck
like needles blooming

the crows have become weary
they have begun to notice
the consistency of what they peck

once dry and lifeless
is now doughy and pulsing

what was once damned
is now leaking

the monsters of clay
are rising to human, again

& back
rock bottom
knows us well

loves us unconditionally

who do i become?
when i laugh at the blood
coating my children

who are we?
when we dance
as they drop
bombs on our heads

you have known humans like us
cursed to lean on a rotten pine slab of wood
you forgot that we are sentient

you failed to remember
what gasoline does
once inside of the body

something like crack
or white phosphorous

it clears life so
that death
may join us for tea

& how unlucky you are
that he's on our side now.

5.
when i am happy
i am only allowed a moment
before the guilt begins to
settle.

6.
i am so comfortable
on this couch

of blood
&
whispers of the dead
sing to me
from the other dimension
or
room

i have always been waiting
for the door to slam
shut on its own

there is something warm
in knowing i have an entire
village waiting for me
on the other side

something like south side
Palestine

my homes are leaking
82 people were shot in Chicago
in 2 days

children are missing pieces of their
skull

there is gaping hole in the face
of that young boy

but im on this fucking couch
& i may as well
be floating backstroke
in the blood

7. i am learning to welcome destruction
i think it's a significant part of faith

believing that from nothing
eternity sprouts

that to begin again
is God
in action

& id rather be the underdog
than the supervillian

maybe im just optimistic
but Harriet Tubman was a narcoleptic
meaning that during her trek through swamp and
strange forest
she at any moment could have fell asleep
and collapsed where she stood

how close to god she must have been
to lay lifeless on eerie ground
but to have never been captured

Harriet Tubman use to speak to god
& he encouraged her to escape

she didn't want to leave her family
but she knew in order to free them

she had to free herself first.

A XICANO SPEAKS:
UNION INHERITED, UNION IMAGINED

by Luis J. Rodriguez

I once strolled along a San Fernando Valley street,
enjoying the way sunlight cuts shadows
from buildings and trees on cement.
Just then a pickup truck drove by and an occupant yelled
“Go back to where you came from?”

What? I am where I came from.
My mother’s tribal roots are
in the Chihuahua desert that stretches
across northern Mexico and US Southwest.
Our ties to this land go back tens of thousands of years.
When she had me in El Paso, Texas from Ciudad Juarez, Mexico,
we went from our land to our land.

Now my brown skin makes me stranger, foreigner,
“illegal”? When did this get turned on its head,
where the brown-skinned don’t have a place
in America anymore?

Five minutes from my house is the largest juvenile
lockup in the country. I go there from time to time
to speak or read poems to incarcerated youth.
At one poetry event, a 14-year-old teen read
a rather sweet poem dedicated to his mother and grandmother,
both smiling from their seats. A staff member later
told me—this young man faced 135 years in prison.

Not long after the mortgage crisis, homeless encampments
popped up across the Valley—under freeway underpasses,
beneath concrete tunnels, deep into alleys. These people became
part of our community, even though businesses, police,
and homeowners often colluded to push them away.

This is the so-called union we inherited,
one that harkens back to when Natives
were slaughtered and pushed off for land;
when Africans slaved in the fields,

that also fed industries,
that also filled world markets.
Or when migrants from Europe or Asia
crowded tenements and “hollers”
to labor in mills, factories, mines.

It goes back to when US invaded Mexico,
to obtain more land, oil, and minerals,
based on an inane idea called
“manifest destiny.”

Laying the ground for Empire.

I imagine a union where whoever steps on these
soils are welcome, like the way Mother Earth
accepts anyone, including the broken or lost.

I imagine a union where poverty is outlawed
instead of the poor. Where resources align to needs,
schools to everyone’s genius, best healthcare to the sick—
not just to those with money.

I imagine a union where if you made mistakes,
the consequences include healing, treatment,
teachings, and a community that recognizes
no one should be judged by their worst moments.

I imagine a union where spiritual morals and scientific
facts are the same, where laws by humans attune to laws
of nature, and where everyone is recognized for their
particular capacities and gifts.

Now we are at odds as a people, everything divided,
estranged from nature and our own natures
as well as the regenerative powers to return,
give back, provide abundance.

To make sure everyone and everything is healthy,
intact, connected. No want. No hunger. No jails.

That every institution, be it churches, political parties,
marriage, production relations, jobs, and schools,
are up for examination, renewal, re-imagination,
and changed accordingly to the new minds,
hearts, and technologies of every generation.

I don't think there's a "perfect" union,
but I imagine one that is whole, encompassing,
solid yet fluid, where we unite
around the essential things
have freedom on the nonessential things,
and compassion in all things.

Is that imagination enough for you?

ANTI ELEGY FOR TRANS DAY OF REMEMBRANCE...

by Cam Awkward

She was:

33, bullet.

35, bullet.

20, bullet.

25, stabbed to death & run over by a car.

66 blade.

22 bullet.

17 fist.

36 blade.

blade.

blade.

bullet.

bullet.

bullet.

stone.

found dead in a field.

overdose.

bullet.

unknown.

rope.

stone.

stone
bullet
oncoming traffic
her own good hands...

//

It becomes a kind of music, doesn't it?
Senseless litany, field of roses, blood red
upturned skirts. I open my mouth & here,
the pith of me. Here, a flock of names, a girl
spilling out onto the street.

//

The trouble with elegy
is that it asks the dead

to live, it calls them back
& who am I to say rise?

Walk again among those
who could not bear

the sight of you? Your body.
Your one good dress.

Today, someone will walk into the night
& then become it. Someone's heart

will crowd with beloved ghosts
& who am I to say, dance

with me here a little longer? Never mind
the bloodshed darling, never mind.

Never mind.

//

Once, a man said *mine*
& a woman became an empty room.
Once, a man said *mine*
& the ocean split & the middle passage.

Once, a man said *mine*
& there's a genocide, America.

How strange. To make the world
with language. To wield desire

as a weapon. To watch a nation burn,
then rise up at your feet.

Once, a girl looked in the mirror
& called herself, said *my name is*

said *I am / I am* & a man said
mine / mine / mine

//

I have so many questions:

Who are

What does

Why

How does it feel to

I'm sorry, I just think

I

And, define

I'm sorry

Your anger

You're afraid of

Can fear be

Define

knife

Define

Fear is

Please

Forgive me

Me

UNTITLED POEM

by Naudika Williams

Glad American

The type to actually smile when they see this country's name on the news

The- i don't see color

Except red, white, and blue

I know every lyric to the anthem

But I don't pay mind to the slave screams as the intro, outro, and background noise...

It's just not my preference...

The type that this whole cul de sac gets matching suits

There's no need to wear justice on a sleeve. That's an accessory

That's too unprofessional

That's too dangerous, that's too disruptive

It is a privilege to be here

To still be hired because your skin is the suit

To still murder without being dangerous

To still be genocidal without being explicit
To still wear **black, brown, and yellow face as a societal foundation**

My picket fence gets sunburns too

And crosses the street from the

Bad American

I have a secret you are obsessed with
I have a double life
Underneath this double consciousness
I've watch your lens colonize mine
To believe the savage in me is 3/5ths away from walking upright
Until I no longer see what I am grounded on

They teach me English was here first
Indigenous is slang
Click your tongue until each muscle can assimilate
To forget how to stretch your family's name in your voice

I'm am tired of being pictured as a gun
When y'all bring tanks into our homes
Are bodies are the only affordable shields we have
With our resistance being the only weapon this nation is not immune to
When we are fighting for liberation

You cannot call **timeout!**

Sad American

I was born with a star spangled umbilical chord wrapped around my fate
And sleep paralysis each time I attempt to reach the American dream
When I was young I wrote love letters embedded in patriotism
Until you chewed them into bullets
And rejected my body with them
I never thought you're verbal assault
Could separate my culture from my body
Until I found myself as the slaughtered meat for this melting pot
Along with the rest of nameless Ingredients
I can't even put my hand on my heart with pride
Because it twists when it remembers my hand, my mother's hand

And her mother's, our generations, our ancestors' hands
Have all been bruised from holding this nation up
I can see faint traces of you, the United States, when I look in a mirror
That I am much more than you, and you are much more than me
But we can't ignore
We are both afraid of each other
And only one of us will be able to walk away alive
I used to think I was the issue
I was the person whose view tipped a little too wrong
Until I found you chained to my spine, dangling, afraid to look down
Knowing once you were free from this body
You would dissolve into burned books and sustainable life
From the skeletons of free people

You're existence was always stolen from mine

I realized you're completely unstable

And none of this is healthy
I don't know if I can love you
Until, America, you want to, and learn to
Love/Dismantle yourself

SELF-PORTRAIT, UNTITLED

by Shira Erlichman

After Francesca Woodman

Francesca, I remember: the hard-

Wood kept your shadow long after you were Gone. Your stain a type of sister. You star Puncturing fog,
you ravaged black bluebird On cement the rain licked raw. I clutch your Darkness like a candle. Your
quicksilver Camera lens hangs Jesus-girls in the door-Way. On the sand your open legs deliver

A horseshoe crab in the puss of your dress. Praise emptiness where a woman's face should Be; each
mirror that steals what we expect.

I too have shrapneled in the gentle good

Air. I've been your portraits. One nipple rests While pressed glass blurs the other breast.

LOVE POEM FOR THE IMMIGRATION CLINIC
IN THE JUDSON CHURCH BASEMENT

by Geoff Kagan-Trenchard

Say love love for the posters on the minister's office wall-

Dolly Parton in rainbow stencil over all caps "ALL ARE WELCOME"

Say love love for the harm reduction kit framed in the hall-tiny trophy case with rubber bound crack stem and a condom.

Say love love to the well worn play kitchen in a spare room.
to the kids, now best friends, who did not know each other an hour ago.

Say love love to the retired librarian translating for me though the gloom. The crack in her voice as she describes the shooting but stays thorough.

Say love love to the mother who lived through it. How she points to the spots on her body where her brother was shot.

Say love love to the minister, aching joints
of his own deportation order, as he ladles soup while it's still hot.

This November spread a new pitch of darkness to an already dark night, but this building is well practiced at carrying the needed light.

EVERYTHING THAT LOVE HAS BUILT, THEY ARE
UNDOING

by Yolanda Wisher

Everything that love has built, they are undoing.
Democracy, like the Sphinx's nose, they are dismantling.
Show me seven new planets so I won't make a fuss
When this one goes bad like Octavia warned us.
White men wait in the wild, building borders,
Our grandfathers' ashes in their fires, our daughters
Between their teeth. Even the sky is asking:
What is the key to their unmasking?
What kind of rabid animal are they carrying in their souls?
There'd be more paradise if it weren't for all the holes

Drilled, the yearning for what they've already destroyed.
Though Stevie Wonder still sings "Overjoyed,"
This is no *castle of love* they are erecting, just
A fortress of whiteness, they're hell-bent on protecting.

SONNET

by Bob Holman

I am Shelle from Albuquerque, and my biracial boys grew up with the inauguration of a biracial president, and now they live in a rise of racism and hateful public rhetoric. And I am Anonymous from Standing Rock. When all these veterans descended -- there's something about that image of people coming up out of unknown places to offer support. Moments like this remind me that everybody's in the woodwork, not coming out. I can get like that, too, just be where I fit. Sometimes you don't have to do a thing. And I am Ingrid from Brooklyn asking, What are some new ways to have conversations with folks? These young people, they are the ones who are going to be leading this fight. Now is the time for solid, deep conversations. Love is the real sanctuary.

And I am Anonymous who left my Oakland bubble for Big Trees State Park and saw these huge signs, "Trump - Last Chance To Take Back Our America." And just thinking in the car about who they mean by "*our* America," and the strength and bond that I feel more so than ever with my community, about the urgency of these times. It's no longer casual friendship, it's like an emergency situation. But creativity will save us all.

SONNET

by Luis J. Rodriguez

Praise to shoes on a homeless winter night
Praise to mothers who nurture without men
Praise to the bottom in a drug-mad flight
Praise to the poet who shatters with a pen
Praise to vibrant children in a static world
Praise to dreamers in cash-only exchanges
Praise to the tattered flag of justice, unfurled
Praise to our nation's depth, breadth and ranges
Praise to a restoring earth with global warming

Praise to large spirits even in cages
Praise to the new alignments now forming
Praise to anger with eyes, not blind rages
There is much to praise, if we are to last
The big within the small, the small in the vast

WE ARE THE WHOLE STORY,
A POETIC ADDRESS TO AMERICA'S FOUNDING FATHERS

by Michelle Lee (Mush)

“All of these stories make me who I am. But...[the] single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.” - Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, The Danger of a Single Story

DEAR GOD. DEAR STARS, DEAR TREES, DEAR SKY, DEAR PEOPLES. DEAR EVERYTHING. --
Celie, The Color Purple

.. .. .

Dear Founding Fathers:

South African writer Antjie Kroger described meeting a nomadic desert poet in Senegal.

He shared with her the role of the poet in his culture. The job of the poet, he explained, is to remember where the waters holes are--survival of the whole group depends on a few water holes (scattered throughout the desert). And when the people forget, the poet leads them to it.*

In my life, I have use poetry to preserve the water of my story in this American desert. My grandmother didn't buy Tums or Alka Seltzer when I had a stomachache, my 할머니

(grandmother) gave me acupuncture with a sewing needle in the living room of her apartment. We didn't buy hamburgers and french fries. We ate lotus root and rice.

*Bogart, Anne. And Then, You Act: Making Art in an Unpredictable World. 2007

I am a cis-woman. I am a mother and an artist of color and child of voluntary immigrants, born inside cold waters of Korean War pinned to the undertow of my grandmother's generation's version of #NoMuslimBan: 1924 Exclusion Act, aimed at preserving American white hegemony, banned Asians, as well as our Arab, Jewish,

African brothers and sisters from stepping onto these American shores. I am island and mainland. New World and Old Country. Like so many of the students I've served, I, too, have felt trapped between The Hyphen that says we are culturally, here. And not.

The American story the Western world has crafted was born out of empires of imagination. That America tells of Columbus *discovered* Hispaniola (modern day Haiti and Dominican Republic) in 1492 or 1776 and calls itself The Beginning. Your great-great-great grandchildren have fashioned U.S. history textbooks from *alternative facts* and expect this nation's youth to revere the number thirteen and know verbatim The Proclamation of 1763. Your brethren have preserved the financial system you architected 200 years ago but are blind to the spiritual debt accrued from their culture of conquest.

All the gods in your prophet-story are named George. There is no mention of mothers or rivers of milk. No mention of the intrinsic interconnectedness of cultural expression, civic imperative and critical education. No truth about Pope Alexander's Doctrine of Discovery or Edwards' City on the Hill. No critique of settlement colonialism. Just white mythology. You wrote your asses off on the Declaration of Independence but what about the letters your wife burned that would've exposed the white bone of adultery?

Some day a girl named Lucille, a descendent of African slaves, born inside one of the original thirteen colonies, will grow into a woman who will pen a simple five-line story on history that will change the course of mine:

they ask me to remember but they
want me to remember their
memories

and i keep on remembering
mine*

And young woman by the name of Ariana, a descendent of indigenous Aztecs, will speak into life the strength of *curanderismo* and her ancestors' oral tradition

[divided country girl]

it is okay to not know the names of your ancestors to have lost the specifics.

the Western world would have you believe
that only what is written is true

* "why some people be mad at me sometimes" by Lucille Clifton was originally published in *Next: New Poems* (1987)

we never really lose our ancestors do
you feel them in the room with you
now?*

I do.

And with these brown women, I, too, declare that I am the whole story.

Heavy is the hyphen that bridges all that be human and heaven, self and other.

I am a poet; it is my duty to remember the water.

Trust.

I'll remember: When we add ourselves to the thread of a collective, we are forever connected. How for us children of immigrants, life can be a permanent borderland, surviving as ghosts before our time.

And still we sing, and declaim, and have happiness and weariness particular to all that is ours.

our *america* is a brick that dreams of becoming a *waterfall*.

our *america* is a handwritten letter ascended out of the dead letter room on the third day to tell you grief is love's souvenir.

our *america* is a name difficult to the tongue.

is Aztlan, a civilization of mathematics and state-sanctioned violence; organized government, hydraulic agriculture and peasant rebellions.*

my *american* is universal health care and comprehensive, long-term, full paid family leave for both parents. it's eliminating that annoying, silent, pervasive culture of intimidation in the workplace that would have parents believe that leaving work to care for a new child or ailing family member means they've irreversibly fallen off Life's comet of progress.

my *america* is on-going, free or low-cost mental health treatments for all.

my *america* is an annual all-expenses paid service-learning vacation for all parents and children of blended families.

* Cuanderismo. Perf. Ariana Brown. Button Poetry. N.p., n.d. Web.
<<https://buttonpoetry.com/ariana-brown-curanderismo-cupsi-2016/>>.

* Dunbar-Ortiz, R. (2014). An indigenous peoples' history of the United States.

my *america* is a grand story of lovers long after the rice hits the concrete: look how their bodies curl
like gold question marks.

when my son is older

i'll hold his face up to this beat up place

& tell him about survival

when his crayonbox mind wonders why we live in a world
of more cigarettes than stars

corner stores

& bars; when he wonders, why men in blue be so mean why they're slow to show

but fast to pull [the trigger] when we need
the most

i'll tell him:

*seeds don't always choose their homes, they are sown. & the most lovely
thing i've ever seen was your father pruning a permission tree*

he turned around & said,

we have to teach it how to grow.

BLOOD IN MY EYE
by Tongo Eisen-Martin

Guided by teeth
Goes the country
There's a cow's mouth on the flag

*Peculiar notepad holds street life dear But the
writer aint here*

He's somewhere talking to tomb stones about the good ol' days-Or splashing reborn water on his latest face

Or wondering how his old gun is doing in the afterlife

Wondering how much death trap is in those gas station aisles. There's got to be a million dollars day on this concrete island. New engine in the moon. Why it never goes down. I mean 72 hours of night...At least according to everyone's posture around here.

8:30 in the morning is really 30 minutes to closing

The city shuts down for a sleepy rat

race

Elevators shoe shuffle to the nearest heaven

Laughing with rats the whole ways up. There are scabs every damn where. In puddles of city. In concentrated schools. In tv lit warm rooms. The light reveals military fatigue when it hits just right on the ties that are wrapped around the necks of lazy white guys.

EMPIRE IS TOO EASY BABY. CHANT AT THE WALLS ALL SUMMER IF YOU FEEL LIKE IT.

Best way for a target to move is shooting back. Running for

a tree line made of freeways

Wisdom says, against a war machine on Tuesdays, you stand no chance.

BUT MAY WE BE THE LAST POOR MEN TO PLAY IT SAFE

Cow's mouth on the flag

Politician raises his hand

And the crowd shows their teeth

Oligarch raises his hand

And little girls are not safe outside

You are all high, depressed, and comrades in function. Fifteen minutes to closing and the city has survived another Black rebellion. Stay down, my love. Don't you love how deadly things whisper in the moment and men kill like

Feathers Fall

The writer knows that death is not a matter of dignity. Rather humor.

In a house that smells like roach races. Nuclear percentages on torn stoves.

I mean here life never was just lazy matches and manic inhumanity

hands rushing away from life towards stoves

What are we doing here?
Surviving, baby
For no reason in particular
See, nobody's gone far today
Nobody will go far tomorrow
Trust me,
Hell
And Heaven
Cannot count

Strange gardens
Where second hand clothes play
And concrete wishes to be human
Only to be cannibal
Where they find you drenched
And drains wish to be human
Only to be worthy arms for you to die in

GREET THEM ALL, GRANDSON. AND DON'T SAY WE GHOSTS DIDN'T WRITE YOU A
POEM.

Don't say we didn't dig your life. Remember the shotgun by the coat rack that everybody in the house knows how to use. Remember the tightrope made of needles for walking in between driveways. And man-made best friends. Go ahead, Grandson. Tune the street again. *Never mind this country kills musicians first.*

*Broken neck nights Scarred
neck life*

*Is these walls could write lyrics What's you angle, angel
eyes?*

*Thirty to fifty rounds pass by
On a street with no daughters this street has no sons just young prisoners of war*

In a racist city that means to make capital

And we know so much
We know it all
We were stood against walls

Who's on the third cross around here?

Cow's moth salivating over the street

-And that is the story of why we aim at teeth.

DRUMPF 100 DAYS

by Mark Bamuthi Joseph

The first hundred days after your heart's been snapped.

No...

The first hundred days AFTER you've spent three straight days crying... after your heart's been snapped...

out of tears, but feeling their echo in your body vulnerable

out of touch with order

and fuckin angry

this president gives me a just got my heart snapped feeling and apparently is doing the same thing to everyone around me

which makes the world feel slightly zombie-ish...

between the visas the wall the healthcare repeal the and the goldman sachs cabinet fictional massacres actual alliances with Nazis and fascists

muslim ban devos dodd frank the yemen attack kellyanne facts sold told bowling green and bannon tiny orange hands on the button a glutton constitution gutting social safety net cutting Kaiser heil herr drumpf scalia think alike justice nominating self-hating

pedophilic rapist climate science debating ruling
via tweet you can't fucking TWEET AT china
dog

has it been 100 days yet?

This is emotionally unsustainable...

And because all the therapists I trust are traumatized too...
I am seeking balance by turning off the news
And listening instead to the corpses begin to speak

Finding refuge in the vigilance of resistance dreams resurrecting themselves
Black Jesus didn't walk on water for me to whine, hell
Black Jesus come down the steps to meet his betrayer at the door
As would the restless dead I can't plug in too much to the interweb I'm tuned to ghosts in my head
instead...

And maybe that makes me crazy

But this thing we got right here... is supposed to be normal?

This punishment society based on a logic of
exclusion
A crisis of knowledge run by a narcissist prone
to delusion

if he sane, well Barack Hussein
call me crazy
but I'm be right here in this corner
100 days and runnin

rhyming spook riddles to myself
preserving mental health by clinging to the talkin spirits
summon the perfect imprint of the genetic memories of the best of us
birth a nation of black thought
listen in to the ringing silence after four little girls were bombed where they prayed
like the Charleston 9 or the savage in quebec who killed 6 and injured 8
to the non believers in the congregation
be careful the wrath of this president's buried corpses

they join the choir of this country's multi-colored trampled
I'd advise to stay sane by thumping the thunderous paranormal bass boomin like the music of Jordan
Davis before a racist shot him in the face
I listen to the melody of the afterdeath memory of that young boy

I won't be dizzy in this alt reality
be steady

I am steadied by genetic memory I am a child of the sugar can sharpened like a spear to break
my ancestor's chains

take 100 days. Look into a fire and remember Egypt
walk home in the rain and remember trayvon
when the train goes underground think of tubman
bring my hands up to alleluia like mike brown
blackout in a purple haze
on top of red clay
invoke the infinite like the color of my true love's hair
be true
be love

what I'm supposed to forget my capacity to conjure the world?
what I'm just supposed to give up the ghost?
this dude is a cyst
but the disease is buried blue vein red blood white supremacist skin deep
oil dollars over rain forest green

buried like the voices in nawlins mortuary

some time it take longer than expected

but I'm putting myself on a fast
100 days
of ghost listening
they've healed me before when my heart was snapped
and they gave me the strength I needed to sanely, humanely,
clap

the fuck

back...