

AFROLESCENCE



Momma left for the third shift. And all I've done since is let my fingers breakdance forward and backward—to a stereo showering my hands with buzzing beats and rhymes. I'm unable to reason the right words to say to you. My thoughts are thoughtless. My ears are seasoned to this toe-tapping sound. The sound of my stereo in harmony with some hazy conversations on the television downstairs and a few bulky engines rewing outside the window. You know that window you used to stare out of cause third shift ended and Momma's halogen lights were gonna pull into the driveway. The window reflected your face: soft, thin-skinned, sunburnt. I miss that offbeat face. The face of an afrolescent. A face that didn't know—no body charred your skin yet.

*For my brother,  
bury your black body.*



*to the grandson who won't die*

Granny's dressed in bonfire burns  
cooking out on the trashcan in the backyard.  
Wait for her to throw you in, burn you black  
into a man.











*homemade moonshine*

constellations of seasalt  
in Momma's milk  
drank that's giving me  
a cottonseed concussion







*MISSING*

broken  
boy finna be  
fixed—fixing to get a binky  
from that drank of the milk carton  
daddy.





*I got Sunday school tomorrow*

I was drinking with Jesus. We be  
spitting spirits to the turning beats  
of the DJ's palms pressing psalms  
onto a beer pong table. Pass me  
that mic cable. You see, I rhyme  
pseudo Bible verses.













*get out the car*

he sits on the curb  
craving these concrete cracks shift like tectonic plates  
and the fate of the curb's crust is a rift  
big enough for him to cannonball into a mixture  
made of some sewage  
and watered-down lead  
like the kind brewing in his Granny's faucet







*the Kalief Browder of 1901*

Why he got to be so big. He seen my waving shadow sank a little bit faster than me. My lungs elbowed the inside of my skin like a feasted belly. How come God got to be bigger than me. I felt nothing underneath my feet. Nothing locked on to my bones or the cracks between each toenail. He seen some blindfolded goddess nail me by my fingernails. It ain't no crucifixion. He seen me hanging, swanging like a dreadlocked Jesus. How much big is there. He seen that sand from the seaweed kick at my throat. So where's that big, its not in me. Nobody's anything is in my hands. I ain't going to choke on: "it was me . . .















*000th street*

when he torched his first blunt  
he inhaled the third person  
a virgin to the burning herbal bourbon  
that switched his brainbox to do not disturb  
scarred his Converse with burn holes  
as he choked on his charcoaled lungtray  
and stained the curb with grass ash

*the sweet shop*

pumping poprocks and happy dust  
under electrocuted shoe strings  
that swang like all those sunburnt boys  
that couldn't dodge the 5-0h, shit





*flying pot*

Call me an afronaut  
cause I hotbox my homemade herbs  
in an UFO: Unidentified  
Funked Object blowing O's  
in Kool-Aid colored skies.









*the word man*

A black boy on the block. Slowly swaggering  
to my car portal. Slanging half o's,  
a sonnet out of his back pocket. Rolling scrolls.  
Blazing quotes. Clearing his throat of a crossword.  
I never seen it before.

*gangsta grillz*

Pops use to vomit 24k leaves  
that leave flakes on the seams of his sleeves  
when he wipes his teeth's fence,  
before thieving cents from the tooth fairy's sheets.













*another one*

Flies fly  
in mouths wide with  
barbequed gold—glinting  
insect wings swagger between teeth  
rusting.











*forenames*

Farmer Walker Reed Du Bois Delany Barkley  
Marley Wiley Parks Parks Lori-Parks Kaufman  
Keith King Sun Ra Shabazz Shakur Shonibare  
Baldwin Banneker Lourde Jackson Jemison  
Morrison Ellison Ellington Tally Tanner Tubman  
Fanon Franklin Galliano Yamamoto Senghor  
Prince Hendricks Hendrix Douglas Charles Cave  
Coltrane Davis Basquiat Hughes Obama Savage  
Hurston Armstrong Lawrence Lewis Ringgold  
Ross Rustin Ripperton Biko Ali Holiday Hamer  
Wonder William Hampton Joplin Mandela Jr.





*intersecting equal signs*

#CivilRightsTwitter  
#TakeItDown  
#ShutItDown  
#ConfederateFlag  
#PrayForCharleston  
#IfTheyGunnedMeDown  
#16times  
#7minutes  
#MikeBrown  
#EricGarner  
#TamirRice  
#FreddieGray  
#AssaultAtSpringValley  
#Ferguson  
#BlackExperience  
#HandsUpDontShoot  
#AmINext  
#AliveWhileBlack  
#ICantBreathe  
#IfIDieInPoliceCustody  
#TakeAKnee  
#IfSlaveryWereAChoice  
#ConcernedStudent1950  
#RacismEndedWhen  
#BlackLivesMatter



#YouOkSis  
#BlackOnCampus  
#OscarsSoWhite  
#SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen  
#AskRachel  
#StayMadAbby  
#NotYourCostume  
#DuragHistoryWeek  
#FlexinMyComplexion  
#CarefreeBlackGirl  
#BlackGirlMagic  
#GrowingUpBlack  
#ThanksgivingWithBlackFamilies  
#BringBackOurGirls  
#SayHerName  
#BeforeYouWatch









*data*

RANAWAY from the subscriber on November the 22nd , a bright colored negro boy named , aged about 12 to 46 years , ordinary size , having lost almost all his teeth ; his lower lip is thick and hangs down : he speaks English and Ebonics with the same facility ; he had on when he went a way a cotton crewneck , very black . A reward of Dollars will be given to whoever brings him back to the subscriber , or lodge him in iron. (nov 21)













*Momma got Rheumatoid Arthritis*

And how should I get your attention: tattoo my melanin with a eulogy or let you graffiti a mural in honor of me? Should I rest in the pieces of my bone filings, silence what's left of me? I know you know my knees creak like floorboards of the Zong. I hear you still heaves us Negroes overboard, dress the deceased in a hospital gown. When I drown the salt washes what's diagnosed ebony off my body: cocoa butter and marijuana and gunpowder. The mixture showers my skin with a counterfeit negative on a patient sheet. But I'm positive my great uncle and his mule died of syphilis in Tuskegee. The study of the nobodies. No body. No crime. Body. No crime. Sometimes I rhyme placebo prayers to the beat of my squeaking knees swinging to the drum of the doctor's hammer. Can't touch this, because you don't want to touch this skin lumping underneath me.



