

## **Ancestral Longing**

My pleas are reminiscent of the sorrowful tune  
A blackbird cries. Head bowed. Wings drawn to  
Its side, like a fledgling unable to fly.  
My lips disturbed like the blackbird's beak. Trying  
Desperately to mimic the sounds, to form the tongue  
Of a language mapped across my body. Yoruba, Igbo,  
Hausa, Twi...

My body is the perfection of the blackbird's mold,  
With the structure of my bones mimicked across  
Lineages from sea to sea, evocative of our shared  
Ancestry.

My pulse is synonymous of the blackbird's dance, stressed  
With longing for those beautiful sounds and colorful beats,  
The kora, kalimba, the talking drum, the balafon, shekere,  
Pronounced with the warm sensation of belonging.  
Like the blackbird, I reach out helplessly for the land but  
Am unable to depart from the sea.

## **Mama**

I'VE NEVER SEEN MY MAMA CRY.  
Figured her tears must've been hidden  
In the ducts swollen beneath her eyes.  
Stroked three times over with that cheap

Mudstone foundation from the corner  
Store off of Weston and Bride.

When I was little, I swore Superman came  
And visited me at night to save me from the  
Perils creeping up like burglars at the doors  
Of my life. Senseless men, not men but lost boys,  
Engaged in constant strife, their bullets ricocheting  
Off of buildings until loud sirens would come blaring  
Around the corner. Tears would start to flush my eyes,  
Until I felt that warm embrace then I knew everything  
Was gonna be alright. Superman came dressed in  
Curlers and a night gown that night.  
You know mama never had wings, but I swore she could  
Fly. She would tap dance on hurricanes and willingly  
Swallow her pride. She always used to tell me,  
“Baby you gotta take life in strides.” In a world full  
Of worthless scenery, mama always filled our heads  
With hopeful imagery. Kings and queens rising to fulfill  
Their destiny. Mama was the type of woman that embraced  
Dirt like it was gold. She has always been my diamond,  
cast from a heap of stones.

## **Stereotypic Foolery**

Question: How do we deal with stereotypes and the way they affect our society?

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.

One day I was among “friends”, and one “friend” said to me, “You’re so smart, and quiet, and proper.” I replied: “Uh thank you.” That was until she proceeded to say, “You know

you're black but you're really white Imani." And with that I immediately began to think. Well then, I guess I must be some kind of Oreo cookie, a treat to your sense of sweet. I swear I looked into that girl's pupils and they were dead within the oceans of her seas, filled with no understanding of what the words she had just spoke meant to me. I figured though, I must've rocked the boat with the articulation of my speech. Black and smart, now that's a breach of the sea. Because apparently it is the equivalent of standing at a convergent boundary. One wins, and one loses. There is never an in-between. I "act like a white girl" supposedly, yet I still maintain the features of my ancestral being, so my skin becomes the slate for your comical foolery. I am "Blacker than this, Blacker than these." My body is the morphology of some exotic creature hidden in the jungles of Halloween. Before someone even gets to know me, they have constructed the entirety of my identity. I am expected to be a young, uneducated, impoverished welfare fiend. With not one, not two, but three babies and three different baby daddies. No one sees my ancestor's hopes and dreams that one day they would give rise to a beautiful, young queen whose eyes could see the opportunities. Who had the possibility to be something other than a slave drug across oceans and forced to work on plantations for centuries. I could be a doctor and save people from a life of agony. Or maybe even an athlete, and sprint across the finish line and wear that flag proudly, reclaim glory for our country. See I am only one of many, story A. There are people out there of different ethnicities, religions, and nationalities that could fill slots B to infinity. People who have experienced discrimination at its peak. The funny thing is we're made to define each other like rips on a pair of torn up jeans. They can be mended, sewn, colored or bleached. Imperfection is a sin of the highest degree. Though we are all swept into a barrel labeled unfit and untidy, given the back door to society, forced to flood the gates of humility just to get a bit of respect a fraction of understanding. We still mindlessly perpetuate that "us vs. them" mentality. The year is 2016 and yet our country has been following the same worn out scheme. We live in a hush hush society where people speak before they think, and when they speak it's nothing but a bunch of bullshit ass stereotypical foolery. So how do we handle it? You may be confused by the question because there is no answer for A-D. That's because the answer is written at the bottom of the page where few people would take the time to read. It simply says, "Let it be and let the good Lord handle everything."

Let it be and let the good Lord handle everything.

### **Liberation from the Lion's Mane**

1...2...3... My knees, succumbed to a  
 Nervous rhythm, danced to that same beat.  
 Clippers buzzed in harmony, one  
 Particular bee grazed on my head  
 Hungrily. Heaps of my deep brown,  
 Coily curls sprang down from my shoulders  
 Playfully, my hands reached up to engage in the  
 Game of trickery. The TV blared loudly, giggles  
 Erupted but quietly.

A gentle sweep, brushed the Leaves from the trees.  
 My heart pulsed in double beats as the brown locks  
 fell past my feet, embracing the ground with a profound  
 unbotheredness. The hairs on the back of my neck rose  
 from their sleep, as a cool breeze ushered the heaps of hair  
 away from me. My mind treaded sheepishly on the bareness of my skin,  
 The curls no longer kissing ever so softly against my cheeks.

My scalp sang in liberation from the lion's mane, cut short but  
 Pretty, A dash of spice to a soul so wisely molded and justly serene.  
 My new magic cloak.....simply me.

### **The Rehearsal Dinner: "Rekia Boyd"**

It is half past ten and yet not even a quake rummages the streets.  
 I am graced only with a conflicted loneliness of supplemental presence.  
 Stuffed bears, melted candle wax, and... pictures, many pictures of me.  
 Each frame definite and unchanging, reminiscent of my years toddler to teen,  
 And just one of me in my twenties. Crumpled letters trifled with prayers and I'm  
 Sorries caress those rich, red blots of life that escaped from my body. The pavement

Cold, no longer accompanied by me. Silence breaks the hour, my soul wants to ignite  
In fury. The verdict rings in my ears, “Not guilty, Not guilty.” My heart throbs viciously,  
But my mouth becomes sealed like the opening at the end of a dead stream. For my brothers  
Mike, Eric, Trayvon, havoc would roar like an angry beast, but for me... I am an unwritten  
story.

Unworthy of the main event. I am but a distant attraction. The rehearsal dinner with many  
plates

Set out for all to join me and yet just one filled seat.

### **Sin Taste Sweet**

Speak and let the valleys of marvel worlds breach the seas.  
Memorize the whites of my eyes but leave the irises for me.  
I'll map the points from the crown of your head to the balls of your feet,  
Engorge myself in mere melanated pleasantry, coffee with just the right splash of cream.  
A gentle touch to corrupt a soul like me. Don't worry, I'll hide the word beneath the sheets,  
And let the leather bound book rest easy.

### **The Blues**

I once heard an old soul sing.  
Her voice howled like swift winds  
Beating against the sails of a ship,  
plying through the sea. Rising and  
roaring. Her tune coarsened with  
tremendous fleet, reminiscent of  
an age that had not yet welcomed

her being. One true decade and her soul flailed, impassioned, waves of happiness, depression, pride, and grief. Her raspy tune enveloped me, welcoming me with a clutching sensation baring down heavily on my body. Her voice pulsed infectiously, like a heartbeat succumbed to bouts of ecstasy. Oh lord, spare me! Her tune carries with it a Deadly sting.