

We Didn't Start The Fire.

black /blak/ • *adj.* **1** having no color from the absorption of all or nearly all incident light (like coal or soot or *determination*). **2 a** of the human group having dark colored skin, esp. of African descent. **b** of or relating to black people. **3** an historical endeavor to persevere (as in *come hell or high water*).

The medical examiner who autopsied Michael Brown described the six bullets to his body, and two graze wounds. Brown had soot, or unburned gunpowder, on one hand with a graze wound, indicating the shot was fired from a distance of 6 to 9 inches, the doctor said. One shot pierced a lung, another penetrated an eye. The final shot was to the top of his head.—Autopsy report on Michael Brown

Oh, yeah. It ain't over, mutha-fuckas!!—Ice Cube

We's a consequence
of the second law of thermodynamics: Anything that can happen
will happen. Like Murphy's Law
code-switched to stereotype: C.P.T. become metaphor. Walking through hell
with a five gallon can of gasoline strapped to our backs,
& five sticks of dynamite clenched in our teeth.

We's drowned at the bottom of the sea. Calcium sign posts
vomited from the belly of a slave ship.
Lynched from a tree.
Chained
beneath a Mississippi high noon
with a bit placed in our mouth: *Is it hot out here, or is that in-just-us?*

We's blackness
handcuffed to a body. The flyblown stench of statistic: Michael Brown's dead body
remained in the street for four hours in the summer heat.

We's pecan-tan to blue-black kaleidoscope. Melanin
blessed misery tire & chained to second-caste like a pit bull. Harnessed it
to generate semblance supply voltage for Tasers & electric chairs. We's biology
with a morbid sense of humor.

We's radical optimism. A dated activism
baptized in the river MLK. We's open-mouthed need.
Defined: Weshallovercome . . .

despite Obama still ain't made black folk bulletproof.

We's last nerve tried, again & again & again. We's riots &
funerals
riots & arrests
riots & political sound-bites
riots & nothing changes. Repeat. Repeat. Repeat . . . like shit happens!

We's black revenge fantasy
where justice is dispensed
with all sort of remorseless projectiles of ballistic metal. We's who?
would willingly give wings to such rage. This is how
the apparatus they propel us into begins to multiply de-nigger-ation.

We's reaching into a pocket extensive furtive movements selling untaxed “loosies”
reaching for the cop’s gun
unresponsive to
repeated threats to rewire our non-compliance. An adjective
of rebellion.

Would rather drink muddy water
[etc.].

We's car chase
into a hail of 137 bullets. We's po-lice “justified” murder: Black &
unarmed
posted to YouTube with 2,000,000 hits.

We's “all lives matter” which necessitates “black lives matter.”

We's 1.5 to two seconds between the arrival of po-lice & another dead child.

We's knowin': While some things change
most remain the same
still composing the Blue(s) in ebony veins.

We's “why? should we follow their laws.”

Note: C.P.T (Colored People Time)

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First minister of the Lost-Found Nation of Islam,
rising from the belly of the beast, from the mist of segregation per Elijah,
fleshing out our dreams of freedom from the hate that made hate:

this liberty, this beautiful & terrible thing, this needful to man as air.

Testing fate between gravity & Allah, between how much pressure
to make a diamond, between each word a logical Word spoken as truth,
as more militant metaphor: lion-like brave &
unafraid,
like why delay anger
that must rage & exclaim & grow ancient?
Our collective blackness, a voiceless, massing maelstrom of moths
seeking out our own burning, as needs must
when the devil drives.

I've seen a man drown in an inch of determination,
a love of self wielding the eventuality of a force greater than our weaknesses.

I've seen a man
wrecked in noon but having ridden the eddies of the sun, buried alive,
neck-deep in what only he perceives & passionately dreaming
the Black Train Homeward; the messiah, betrayed with a kiss. . .
our manhood, our living, black manhood
into the redeeming pressure of Allah & carrying the scent of things
lost in the fire.

Note: incorporated into this poem are italicized fragments by June Jordan (2nd stanza),
Robert Hayden (7th & 9th stanza), T.S. Eliot (3rd subtitle) & Ossie Davis (12th stanza)

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