Stories In Black

Keisha-Gaye Anderson

Abstract

Three poems about anti-Blackness and state violence.
Black Story

Black is the only story
keeping this machine of malice and denial
ambling in circles
while the vultures rest
in peripheral places
off the grid
piping a straw
into your brain

Black bullets
Black blood on concrete
Black baby hungry
Black body die of
Black people diseases
Black girl please shake that ass dance is all the rage
Black is beautiful today, but next year, we'll see
Black boys don’t cry
Black poverty
Black vetted through school is safe cool
Black fits the description, fetches hefty bounty, whether in suit or sneakers
Black believers rebrand Jesus, still steppin’ in the name of love
Black brothers wear blinders looking for love that's been beside them all along
Black bruises shaped like smiles, still grinning for the camera, and waterproof shelter
Black economic plan is another scam. After all that money, where the school at?
Black mothers' tears on repeat
Black retreat before even tryin’ to walk through a shrapnel whirlwind of high stakes and false needs
Black be so black be so black be so black that they don’t see we

But I have always seen
Myself

And these are your bogeymen anyway
not my truth
I am
that I am
as uncomplicated and ancient
as a tree
a stream
a need to laugh
and kiss a lover
and more than all that
a permutation of creation
who has no interest in helping you feel safe
or entertained
our pain is not
nourishment
or a bonfire
it has only been
one more way
for you to not look at yourself
to insist there is an other

"All men are brothers,"
Baldwin said,
even knowing then
he would be
misunderstood

We good.

We write ourselves
and know it will all come crashing down
when you decide turn the lens on
you
and see a stranger
see loneliness
see pain

Go tell your own story
if it pleases you

Just leave me out of it
A Bullet is a Boomerang

Every day
a lava flow of words
a litany of black death
makes ash
of the sapling hope
you tended with
verses of dead poets

The words on screens
on paper
out of the mouths
of human-like drones
tell which flesh
what bullets went
where
and the confetti
of names
creates zero visibility
treacherous conditions
for living in any direction

A toxin
that numbs the brain
to the death spiral
that sucks us down
while somebody
parties,
apparently,
cause these bullets get no rest

Burrow into 7 year-old
with barrettes
blast through chest
of teen with sweet tooth
separate the neck of man genuflecting to who he was taught
looked like god
but what kind of life giver
protector and server
racks up bodies
like poker chips?
What game is this?
There is just no
brown skin
that those bullets can't find
no shortage of canned
explanations
rationalizations
lies
put into print
for you to chew on
lay over your sleep
like a burlap blanket
in a blizzard

But we can't die
you understand?

A bullet is a boomerang
bringing in the armada
of Great Old Ones
birthing themselves back
into babies
born with gray hair
and the more bullets they make
the more ancient the ancestors
who step through that door

And if I were the blind bullet makers
I would study why I think
killing would keep me breathing
and I'd be very careful
who those bullets
wake up
Endless Sleep

Not because
we are bulletproof
do we want to be shot at
‘Hard Life’
as a birthright
is a trap

Who put those
crab in a barrel
anyway
when they come from
endless the sea?

What does it really mean
to be free?

Hunger keeps us running
because there is something
that devours the
best of what we are
and our reflection
becomes a comet’s tail
a fading rainbow
a coil of smoke
that evaporates
when we wake
to walk in circles
for someone else’s
pleasure
or amusement

They stay
happily inert
with no map
nor desire
to be better
and maybe
that’s their limit
critters pulling us down
by our feet
Why can't we wake
from this sleep?
About the Author

Keisha-Gaye Anderson is a Jamaican-born poet, author, and visual artist based in Brooklyn whose books include *A Spell for Living, Everything Is Necessary*, and *Gathering the Waters*. Her poetry, fiction, and essays have been widely published in national literary journals, magazines, and anthologies. She is a past participant of the VONA Voices and Callaloo writing workshops, and was shortlisted for the Small Axe Literary Award. Her visual art has been featured in numerous exhibitions and literary journals. In 2018, Keisha was selected as a Brooklyn Public Library Artist-in-Residence. Most recently, she was presented with the Poetic Icon Award by her alma mater, Syracuse University. Keisha holds an MFA in fiction from The City College, CUNY. Website: [www.keishagaye.ink](http://www.keishagaye.ink). Email: keishagaye1@gmail.com