

Clenched fists do no building.

-Reagan Jackson



WOLF seven poems
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WOLF

seven poems

by JORDAN
CHANEY

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I. *PURSUANCE*

PREAMBLE

tonight

I'm going to
drive my words
into the grindstone

let
sparks and
fragments
fly freely

gonna
cut,
shape,
and polish
them for
display

tonight

my words
will be ugly,
unwanted,

bitsy
window
ornaments

that collect
decades
of dust

atop little hideous
white doilies

small eyesores
impossible to
throw away

SPEAK YOUR TRUTH

ya might as well
say it how you feel it

cause if a person doesn't
want to hear it
they won't

you can
tap dance
soft-shoe
whisper or roar
but mollify no more

it makes no never mind
when they never mind
you

to lie is to drink poison
so say it how you feel it

speak your truth

A HOPELESS WORLD

Almost gave up.
I watched my TV fill with blood
and bombs everyday
at 5 and 11.

Pressin' the clicker to see religion
bash religion and wipe their muddy
shoes on love's holy rugs.

Saw patriots on both sides point
spears to one another's gullets;
like two giants grappling ferociously
over road-kill in
the most fruitful land on the planet,
both sides claiming to be holy.

Had the word nigger slung at me, at
my son—on a sunny day even.
Kept my cool, the apology felt like hot
tar pouring over my black wounds.

I was sent several invitations to hate
my fellow man.

Almost gave in.

I drank hate's bitter poison
once; it coursed through
my veins, it damn near penetrated my
bones.

The brackish taste almost changed
me.

But I see the chains and so I refrain.

When it comes to converting,
love is merely trying to do the
same thing as hate.
Despite all of the bloody reasons I
was given

to spit at the world,

I didn't.

II. *ACKNOWLEDGEMENT*

TRAYVON

Lynching is not dead

it's done to our
daughters and sons
under the bright bulbs
and scorching suns
of pop news,

the noose squeezing
tighter on black necks until
it stretches too far too soon
too little too late and black
heads pop loose

rolling like thunder,
a strange fruit,
a sickening game,

now our black hearts
are bowling balls sinking
back into gutters
our fair-skinned fathers
our maple-toned mothers
our copper-coated cousins

black sisters and brothers

all in a single file line,
kinks in the system,
nappy hair getting profiled
pinned up against our own skin then
pinned down in the pen

if you live

had he lived?

he probably would've
spent life in the pen
for not giving in

for protecting his sweet skin
with nothing more than sweets,
for the ripening melon of his melanin
and for living up to being
a developing human being

human clay
without a chance
to escape the mold
my mirror

your mirror
muddy waters
fox news fodder
new age
black face
minstrel show
a wobbling duckling
a child walking home
the grass damp with his blood
concrete carved out in his bone
youthful blanket of black skin
gets covered in red rain then
gets covered by the very news
anchors that weigh us down

someone comfort the mother,
somebody catch his father's tears,
turn your palms into ponds

yesterday we all swung from trees -
eyes bulging, our neck ties too tight
to breath, to scream!

we human quilts
are coming undone
black human prey

black humans pray

this is too close to home
Tray lives in my home
He's my son

and sometimes he doesn't
take out the trash when I
ask him to

we're being thrown aside,
laid to waste
by bloody finger tips
picking negroes like cotton
picking pickaninnys
for prime time spots
you pick me up
to watch me drop
picking on me always
always claiming that
we always get away
and look at us now

still

look at who is lying still

look at this child lying

still

if poems could stop bullets,
if they could replace
blindfolds with microscopes,
if Skittles could glow in the dark
brighter than gun spark catching dark
skin, if Arizona tea could talk and
scream then from the bottom of it's
aluminum lung
it should've screamed

“don't shoot!! I am only 17”

If
Trayvon Martin
had been
Trayvon Smith

his body wouldn't be lying still,

lifeless

on a lawn as we gaze upon

our fallen mirror
we steal our reflection back

2

still niggers

still bodies
like fallen statues on lawns

still being
tarred & feathered
wingless

still unarmed
still swinging by limbs
from trees

still blood on the leaves

still fit the description
of porch monkeys
of tar babies
and toms

still well spoken

while choking on
swallowed tongues

still as the night is dark...

dark as my skin is still a target,
copper as badges and still blacker
than Billy clubs
of skilled marksman,

well dressed hounds of the law
that along with the heavy weight
of history books still call me
“sick ‘em”

and they do!

and some of us get away,
and some of them too

WOLF

you

nigger

you

hook-nose jew

you

terrorist Muslim
with a bomb
in your shoe

retard
fag
spic...

you
good for nothing
but pussy grabbing

dirty
low

down

nasty
bitch

this should've offended

you

NO

this should've ALARMED you

the wolf
didn't even have
to wear wool

power
hates
truth

hates
you

rotten fruit
strange fruit

swing by your
adam's apple
from the branch
of a poplar
prostrate yourself
at the bloody bumper
of a cop's car

and worship

the ogre
you voted in
a puffed up pop star
a heartless tin-man
a tinsel-tongued con
a pebble-sized klansman
dropped in a pond
whose ripples rip hoods
off of sympathizing pawns
trump signs like burning
crosses in lawns

everywhere
citywide
hilltop
and countryside

lit up
till dawn

you

cry baby
tar baby
pour hot tar
on your open wounds
suck it up
buttercup
you lose

hate speech comes in
silver spoons,

comes in silk ties and
pressed suits,

comes smiling in pearly whites,
comes in Christians burning churches
down,

comes robed in white tooth and claw

white power through privilege

comes in white houses,
comes in the loins of our mummies

comes in to oppress to
make sure the have-nots
somehow have even less

comes in systems and structures
shrink wrapped in wool

insulated with fragility and guilt built
with a blind eye, a turned cheek

held together ever so neat and ever
so meek by the maddening mortar of
denial

my friends must
hate me
lately

well that's ok cause
my Black life matters

you sunless
alabaster red-neck bastard

wanna burn us
wanna rip our flesh
from neck to hip
from hip to neck

ripped clothes
exposed back bones

rip us off
bankrupt our identity
cash in on culture

make normal
the nazi

fascists
in fashion

make rape
blur in with gray

bring back from the dead
the living dead

and why not?

you got nothing to lose
you're all penniless

destitute

we're told

meanwhile...
this copper-hearted half-man
howling from his ivory tower
and sharpening his tusks

on us...

swears he's made of gold

III. *RESOLUTION*

YANGA'S SONNET

There are no black people in
paradise.

The sun shines on everything all the
same.

Papayas, all people, palm trees,
beans and rice.

Curls are welcomed here as heavenly
mane.

The history books are void of slave
meat.

The town's mouths are ripe fields of
sugar cane.

Street vendor has a story to tell me;

“All chains were broken free in
Yanga's name.”

TVs and big books have erased my
line.

It's real nice, no good or bad
references...

My home paints me with big lips and
no spine!

This bold land 'least lends a lil
reverence.

Machete tongues have chopped me
all to shreds.

...the thick of me can't be conquered
by death.

BLUE MAGIC

The first time I saw my own
complexion in the media it
was in a book of Norman
Rockwell paintings published
by the Saturday Evening Post.

My reflection was distorted.

There was a little black girl
wearing pig tails in her big curls,
wearing white slippers and
a white Sunday school dress
in a white man's world,

she was being escorted across
the school campus by US Marshalls,
through rotten tomatoes thrown,
through a back drop of epithets on
her skin tone, she was boldly wading
through

the wholesome ignorance
of good ol' civilized folks.

It spoke to me.

The very next time I saw
my complexion in the media,
it was a photograph of
a freed slave sitting with
his bare back slightly turned
and slightly staring back at me.

His back said
“look what they did to me, to us”.

His back was lashed up
from neck to rib
to shoulder to hip
and the whip-marks
were crisscrossed
and some of them were
whitish pink and every
other rip in his flesh was
as deep and as dark as
the men that lashed him,

the wounds
resembled train tracks
so much that

they later on
became roadmaps

and his bruised skin
ultimately became
the blue prints

for the underground railroad
the hell with that!
Hail Harriet Tubman!

Hail sacred tunnels buried
under America's flared nostrils
and pointing straight towards Polaris.
How dare they show me this and sell it
to me as if this is all we had ever
been.

Now this offended me, because my
history pre-dates the rotten tails of
strange fruit, the noose, black face,
pearly whites and shuffling shoes on
Minstrel Shows,

my lineage predates the cotton gin,
Jim Crowism, and even slave boats.

My history is as golden and sun-
kissed as Cleopatra's skin!
It's Isis tinted.

And our black faces get tarred &
feathered in the news, they think we
are one mass monolithic group,

that we're all
Menaces II Society
or Boyz N the Hood,
we're all O-Dogg
and Snoop,

and for as much as
I still love Tupac
the greater majority
of us are nothing
like Bishop in Juice!
It's true.

Our history predates
new age so-called soul food,
Cadillac's and Coups!

The history books

forgot to tell you
that in our gene pool
math geniuses
and architects swam;

the very hands that
raised the Pyramids
all the way up to the
stars from golden sand
were black hands!

You need to hear this.
Black is beautiful.
It always has been.
It's the canvas for stars.

Black is beautiful and
though we've been marred,
at night it cradles the sun
and wraps its arms around
everything near and far.

Its destiny has always been
to build a civilization on the
drum skins of your heart!

It was only for a brief moment
in time that the flesh on our
backs we're ripped a part
and scarred but we go back,
I'm talking way back

and so if you're sitting in
your classroom and your
curious classmates ask you
the timeless question,

“can I touch your hair?”

Don't be offended tell them ah yeah,
and ask them can you feel the curls
like the fly wheels of time combing
them back to the cradle of man kind,

ask them while they run their fingers
through your locks like keys can they
accept your curls for their kinks, can
they feel the blue magic of African
skies and even the history of Greece,
and ask them can you actually see me
for me,

the real me outside of print media,
history books and TV, can you see me
in full living color for ALL of my
history.

RED

If I were to explode, if I were to
spontaneously combust, if I were to
“big bang” in this very moment, I
would become a never ending
universe marooned on the very crux
of its own existence, I would become
limitless wine-colored galaxies and
ruby-toned astral bodies dancing
nude in Rumi’s visions, I would strip
down to my very crude essence,
beneath my blood, disrobing my own
hemoglobin’s message written in
resin, exposed and opened, while
gently washing up upon the crimson
shores of my own ocean,
reincarnated, I would drink time’s
timeless potion, if I could come back
again-again, I would, I would, whirl
with the worlds, I would, dance, I
would, spin, I would laugh more often,
I would be reborn into a billion glinting
disco balls and send shooting
burgundy beams from my soul then
paint the entire town red again and

again- I said I would give the city my entire blood supply and paint the town red I meant; the sidewalks, the street corners, city hall and cop cars, cats, dogs, playgrounds, parks, the day cares, the night clubs, all of it red, from stop sign to traffic light I would go on and on till the break of dawn spills its holy pink light over my deep red skin, since the beginning I have been burning bright cherry colored bon-fires from within sending smoke signals to heaven to no avail. And still I set sail. I can bend time around my grin cause I am powerful like red is, I am terrifying like first kisses, I sink ships like god's forgotten mistresses- I'm talking about life and her fragile riches cause the true richness is in all that is and what just might be missing from your bloodshot consciousness. I'm talking about the color of passion, high heels and silk dresses, the color of lingerie, lust, and lipstick and even the glowing heat of the sunset's edges. So stop and smell the

rosebushes! If it were up to me we'd all see the rising sea with rose-colored lenses; we'd all dive in mother earth's purplish pond to escape her cycle, to escape her cycle, to escape her cycle. See we've been at war with afterbirth for quite some time and we all know that history doesn't repeat itself but it sure does rhyme, I've got a few things figured out and its all about time, my bloodline is starlight and yours is just as red as mine...

IV. *PSALM*

A BLANKET STATEMENT

On nights when the air is too cold, too
bitter to breathe

when your bones are icicles
when fog is all you see

when your tongue is a slick road and
your words slide past it with little to
no traction and your soul can't seem
to stay in its seat, unthaw or speak,
when you've turned ice cold and have
no other recourse but careening off
your path, kicking, howling, and
screaming from the alp of your being

when it appears your enemies have
succeeded in reducing your once-
upon-a-time-tropical-island-heart into
a hardly recognizable hardened ice
cube

it is my wish for you...

that you remembered

to pack a blanket

a blanket like a road map
to your way back to you

a blanket as warm as
your mother's womb

one that thoroughly wraps you,
that draws a bead of sweat from your
brow and slowly begins to help melt
the bitterness down

into a small placid pool

where you can gaze into
your own reflection
in the ripple,
in the mud,
I hope you cling
to your essence

cause you gotta not
give into what this
worlds tempting you

to be

ugly,
cold,
mean

some unfamiliar
frost-bitten
thing

from hatred so deadening

when fog is all you see
know that your resentments won't
protect you

your walls can not save you
the brand of wool this breed
of wolf is biting to sell you

will fail you

come in from the cold,
let your life force melt you,
unthaw your alps, your heart,
I have a story to tell you

when the first storm hit Standing Rock, the Water Protectors were waist high in freezing waters, when the riot police were shooting water canons, tear gas, and rubber bullets in their faces;

they stood there and prayed.

before the second storm hit they were still taking hits...

the Wisdom Keepers told the Water Protectors to collect every spare glove, hat, and blanket that they could find...

and on horses they rode up to the line and gave them to the coldhearted police

that act of swaddling must've been too deep, a few officers couldn't withstand the loving heat of humanity's fleece, to be loved so unconditionally by the people they

were ordered there to beat; they
turned their badges in,
in loving defeat...

I'll give you my word,
your hard-feelings
will fail you
come in from the cold,
let your life force melt you,
unthaw your alps, your heart,
I have a story to tell you...

WHAT IT'S ABOUT

It's about striding in the light even while the world looks darker and darker with every news report and newspaper article. It's about choosing to love when the invitations for hate are overflowing and abundant. It's about finding the strength and the courage to be gentle and to be kind and to smile when right outside your door you're tempted to be resentful, cold, and apathetic. It's about finding personal power when political and spiritual leaders haven't found the power to follow through. It's about not letting the world change you. It's about you changing the world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jordan Chaney is a spoken word poet, author, public speaker, teacher, mentor and all-around creative residing in Eastern Washington's wine country.

Awarded the 2017 Commitment to Diversity award by AACCES, Jordan also guest speaks at colleges on race, politics, and social justice.

He is the author of *Art of the Spoken Word* – a workbook for enhancing communication skills, creativity, and confidence. He has published two other collections of poetry: *Rocket Fuel for Dreamers*, a poetry book about love and manifesting one's dreams, and *Double-Barreled Bible*, a collection of urban poems that blend Eastern and Western philosophies. He has also written a children's book, *M.C. Seuss: Once Upon a Rhyme*.

Most recently, he created Urban Poets Society, a youth-leadership program that promotes arts, literacy, and leadership in his community. He currently teaches a performance poetry and communications class at a local Juvenile Detention Center, where he helps youth find their voice through the power of poetry.

To book Jordan Chaney for speaking engagements, poetry workshops, performances and other events he can be contacted at:

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