

Poetic  
Thoughts  
Spoken  
Directly

Sharif Simmons

Sample  
Sample

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## First thought

These poems should be shouted. Ripped out of books and left on sidewalks, glued to walls and posted in shelters, used as blankets in the cold and to fan the overheated, be comfort to the voiceless and act as weapons against the cruel.

These words were forged from unexpected pain, sudden loss, consistent change and the random patterns in fractals. Spanning from Sirius to Shashemene, Miami to Marrakesh, Union Island to Addis Ababa, Harlem to Amsterdam, Westbury, Los Angeles and Birmingham.

These thoughts have been soaked in trauma, bitten by fists and guns, broken by American steel and bullets, cosseted by the elements of Earth, Wind and Fire, the burning sun and the *Keys of Life*. They've watched this human experiment for years, Paulo Coelho's magic realism, Neruda on love and war, Baraka's call to arms, Sanchez's hand grenades.

You'll find me in this place. Unafraid and buck ass naked, stripped of fame's vanity, searching for the sacred profane, re-building a body from fractured skeletons and personal truth. I'm not alone here. I'm taking you with me, entering your eyes with open meaning. Let's work through this P.T.S.D. Our collective trauma imprinted as songs for the front-lines.

This nameless Blackness I am. America's stolen gift and cargo I am. We are scions of stardust, whips and mayhem, called out of our names. You will find me in these pages feeling scarred walls in the dark, in search of a switch, discovering freedom in pain. Our sutured wounds mend our broken futures, re-imagining a world with poetic thoughts spoken directly.

*Art is whatever makes  
You proud to be human*

Amiri Baraka

## Melting Pot

Tired  
Weak  
Weary  
They came

Ribs bare  
Bones displayed  
Children crying with hunger  
They came

Greeted by angry patriots  
The gangs of New York  
A magnificent hatred  
Afraid of change  
Calling for conformity  
A pledge of allegiance  
Stars and bars colored  
Red, white and blue

Yugoslavia, Slovenia,  
Czechoslovakia, Germany, Spain  
Scotland, Ireland, France, Poland  
And Sicily

Ellis Island  
The foot of liberty

Time would welcome  
The new Immigrant song  
Divided, they melted into  
This great American theme;  
Weaponized Whiteness

They would all come to agree  
If anything else  
We will never have to be  
Black.

## The Apology

Smacking that ass  
Under champagne tits  
White Lines on glass tables  
Fables of egos and dicks  
Blunts and bitches  
Burn everything  
To erase the memory  
Of original sin

I'm sorry  
For forgetting  
How you slit your  
Children's throats  
To set them free

Rolls Royce jewelry  
Pussy poppin'  
Pimp corners  
Broken love hustled  
At top shelf  
Needles and fresh blood

I'm sorry  
For forgetting  
The shark infested passage  
The overboard suicides  
Sickness and mutinies

Knees bent under  
Blue-eyed blonde  
Stain glassed mosaic  
Western Jesus watched the children of Ham  
Sunday sermons tithing  
Privilege from his hand

I'm sorry  
For forgetting  
How the whipping posts  
Killed Orishas  
Broke the drums from your fingers  
Cursed Oshun and drowned Yemeyá's waters  
Crushed Elegba from your bones

Ivy league towers  
The queens English  
Placing White faces  
Over Black minds  
Brain drained Ghettos  
Promised acceptance  
To the hollowed-halls  
Gold statue diplomas  
Leaving earth's wretched  
Behind you

Forgive me  
For very time  
I heard NIGGER  
And didn't react

Broken families  
Sold to white fingers and spit  
I'm sorry  
We've forgotten  
The hot summer cotton  
And bloody sweat

Beg forgiveness  
To your memory  
Never again  
Forget

# **The revolution will not be SOCIALIZED**

*In tribute to Brother Gil Scott Herron*

You will not be able to stay home brother,  
You will not be able to login, post a pic or  
Change your status.  
You will not be able to lose yourself on the Kardashians  
Or skip out for beer during the national anthem  
'Cause the revolution will not be socialized

The revolution will not be socialized  
The revolution will not be brought to you on Twitter  
In 280 characters  
There will be no pictures of an Orange Bigfoot  
Grabbing coochies and leading the charge by  
Jeff Sessions, General Kelly or Steve Bannon  
To drink red flavored Kool-Aid  
Mixed with water from a Flint River

The revolution will not be bought to you by the  
Weinstein Company and not star-molested ambitions  
Toxic male privilege or Ren and Stimpy  
The revolution will not give you good credit  
The revolution will not cure your bunions  
The revolution will not make you look lighter in the mirror,  
Or make your bank account bigger  
The Revolution will not be on social media, brother

There will be no pictures of you and LeBron James  
Hitting a 3 pointer at the buzzer  
Then sliding a 60-inch flat screen TV into a  
Stolen ambulance on the dead run.  
NBC could not predict the winner  
On November 8th, 2016  
Reporting from 92 precincts  
Welcome to the great New World Order again  
The revolution will not be socialized



There will be no pictures of Colin Kaepernick  
Throwing a 90-yard touchdown to  
win the super bowl in the NFL  
There will be no movies of Marcus Garvey, Toussaint L'Ouverture,  
Mary McLeod Bethune, Queen Inzinga or Samora Machel

Honey Boo Boo, Duck Dynasty and the fucking Bachelor  
Will no longer be so god damned relevant  
Because Black people will be in the streets  
Looking for a brighter day  
The revolution will not be socialized

There will be no trending stories in your news feed  
There will be no trending stories in your news feed  
And no pictures of well meaning philanthropists  
Throwing money away on guilt free trips to Puerto Rico  
Wearing high heeled disaster pumps  
And a let them eat cake type of smile  
Tossing paper towels

The theme song will not be sung by  
Miley Cyrus, Toby Keith, Kid Rock, Rachel Dolezal or a  
Blue-eyed Jesus  
The revolution will not be reposted and shared on  
Facebook, Instagram, Reddit or Pinterest

The revolution will not go better with Cherry Coke  
The revolution will not fight the germs caused by white supremacists  
The revolution will not LYFT you into an UBER seat

The revolution will not be socialized  
The revolution will not be socialized  
The revolution will be...

*In your face like a can of mace, baby*  
*Is it burnin'?*  
*Well, fuck it*  
*Now ya learnin'!*

## Rebirth of a Nation

*From the ECHOEFFECT V01.1*

She got pregnant  
The day she was born  
Conception  
Birth of a Nation  
Baptized in film  
A monumental blueprint  
In the splendor of destiny

Innocence left her  
Before she was ever thought of  
So her condition stayed hidden  
So well  
She thought it would simply  
Disappear

As an infant  
Her large stomach was taken as  
Rapid growth  
A symbol of stability  
And making it through winters  
She ate for one  
But managed to feed two

*Some ate in houses with tables  
Some ate in yards and fields*

Stolen milk fed her  
When she felt her first labor pain  
It separated her from  
North to South  
South to North  
Armies formed in her stomach  
Their bloodlines connected  
To the Mothers and Fathers  
Who simultaneously impregnated her  
Those were the people of Timbuktu and Mali

The Gold Coast and Cameroon  
Of England, Arabia and Spain  
Those were the Navajo, the Sioux, the Cherokee  
And Apache  
They kicked her in outrage  
Swam in her glowing placenta  
With little fingers pushing against  
Her expanding walls

The labor pains continued over time  
Knocking the wind out of her stature  
Destabilizing her at unexpected moments  
Like all unplanned pregnancies do

Her second trimester  
Was passed off as  
Wealth and generosity  
A patriotic virtuosity  
Surrounded her need to  
Conceal her condition  
Her seeds committed lynchings  
Segregated schools and water fountains  
Forced the second child to assimilate  
To the first  
Convinced the younger one  
It was cursed

When she thought no one was watching  
She picked the troublemakers from her gut  
Silenced them with their own anger  
Their names were Marcus and Ida  
Emmitt and Angela  
Wallace and Shakur  
Their names were Martin and Malcolm  
Hampton, Huey and Medgar

But suddenly  
Without consent or executive order  
Her big stomach  
Was seen in one single shot  
Revealed was a naked child  
Running through napalm  
The whole world watched her Vietnam  
Some images leave nowhere to hide  
So she covered herself with a flag  
And called it American pride

*She kept eating and eating and eating and eating  
Eating and eating and eating and eating  
Eating and eating and eating and eating  
Eating and eating and eating and eating*

Until her crumbs were the size of cakes  
Even the children she neglected took anything they could take  
They took McDonald's with extra French Fries  
Gilligan and roller skates  
Virgin births, karaoke, NSYNC and Kenny G  
Cartoons, brand new cars, drive-ins and whiskey

She gathered her neglected  
And placed them in  
Circular cities  
All along her over eating was excused  
As foreign policy  
Her stomach got so big  
It affected her psychology  
Here is a child born into a pregnancy  
A pregnancy denied  
A pregnancy of smallpox and blankets  
Of Sharks and Slave ships  
Plantations and bull-whips  
Of cotton, thorns and molasses  
Auctions, new deals, Jim Crow  
Ku Klux and the New South  
A pregnancy of diversity

Assimilation and flags  
Hippies and Nixon  
Cold Wars and Panthers  
Revolutions and change  
Globalization, recession, game shows  
And millionaires

A pregnancy of five hundred and twenty-nine years  
Ending with a natural birth  
On September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001  
The Rebirth of a Nation was begun

From denial and ignorance  
The child birthed itself  
Born screaming with eyes of fire  
She has the face of a Rothschild  
The arms of a Rockefeller  
The stare of a JP Morgan

And a brand new  
Appetite for destruction

P.S.

*At least once a generation  
This government has  
To demonstrate  
The truly dangerous nature of  
Those who seek to transform it  
By...linking them in the public minds  
With the most horrendous crimes of the day  
Then executing them*

—NOAM CHOMSKY

# Senseless

*Virginia Tech Massacre, April 16th, 2007*

## I.

The news came  
Like it always does  
In hails of bullets and blood  
Tears and grief  
NBC, CNN, ABC, NPR.  
Tuned into America's pedigree  
Her 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment shock therapy  
You have the right to bear arms  
To bear witness to tragedy

## II.

I was leaving class that day  
On my second or third cup of coffee,  
Teaching poetry at  
Homewood High School in Alabama.  
WBHM repeated the horror movie  
This was real.  
Students sitting still,  
Waiting on futures,  
Parents, at home, overwhelmed.

## III.

The faces of my students  
Took shape in my memory.  
The new normal,  
Academic graveyards,  
Evil visited on the innocent.

## IV.

I took lunch to my son in school.  
Relieved to see his face,  
We did our handshake.  
Slap on the front, slap on the back  
Grab hands then finger snap.

He was 12.  
I was grateful.

**V.**

Back in the car,  
I heard the murderous poetry  
The carnival of butchery,  
Fear,  
Bullets and death,  
At home,  
It played out on cable's Technicolor  
The familiar lock down,  
The running from buildings,  
The hands up,  
The debates,  
The guns,  
The hate.

**VI.**

Professor Nikki Giovanni's spirit  
Was ego-less.  
The pain evident on her familiar face,  
She told us it was coming.

Raised the red flag  
Making the senseless real.

**VII.**

Approaching the stand  
The convocation began

Professor Nikki Giovanni:

*We are Virginia Tech.*

*We are sad today, and we will be sad for quite a while.  
We are not moving on, we are embracing our mourning.*

*We are Virginia Tech.*

*We are strong enough to stand tall tearlessly, we are brave enough to bend to cry, and we are sad enough to know that we must laugh again.*

*We are Virginia Tech*



# Crossing Borders in Birmingham

2004

Walking across the Southside,  
Newly divorced, unemployed, a poet.  
Every step washed in humid curiosity.  
The importance of change  
Leading the day.

Across Highland avenue,  
Near Bottega,  
Down the hill and to the right,  
I stop at the Garage.

Everything had meaning then.  
Broken statues in the bar courtyard,  
Ruins of empires,  
History and beer  
My poetry, angry and reaching  
A declaration of war against borders

I am not the Nigger you think I am  
I am not the Nigga you think I am

It's the rebel  
Always told to say what's unsaid  
Write what's not written  
Live where no one's living

Under Vulcan's eyes,  
I was tested  
Crossing borders built on  
Fear and old ways  
Empty fences on both sides

I am not the Nigger you think I am  
I am not the Nigga you think I am

Grateful no one saw me  
Coming to town.

## Discovery

Pieces

Looming large on canvas

Ambition meeting reality

The Sisyphus push

Uphill, making the best of what's given

Walking a city where history is

Draped in segregated counter tops,

Sheriffs full of Bull, racism made legal.

This self-assured northern Blackness,

Dapping down the street like

"I wish you would"

The signs have come down,

Time has passed,

But you still hear it,

A pervasive silence

Get back where you belong.

The chessboard played in Black & White,

West End and Ensley,

Southside and Mountainbrook,

Shuffling in offices,

In suits and scrubs, sterilized handshakes,

Opening gentrified doors.

The night is where I discovered it,

Hidden from the Sun,

Made bare under dirty Moons.

Dark corners before dawn,

Equality's less known truth,

I watched them forget how,

Everyone gets wet,

When it rains.

## Silent proxy

She got the love she wanted  
from me  
In twenty-seven pieces

I delivered a  
fragmented heart  
repeating a muted beat  
and now we are light years apart

I reached for a thunder cloud  
and stood pierced by a bolt of sunshine  
honey wine  
Sweet honey wine

Like everything that moves  
Our centers remains still  
Unavailable  
Unbending to tears  
O' mirror, mirror  
What do you see  
A silent proxy  
Built of fire  
Fleeing through four dimensions  
Yeah  
I'll be back  
And when I come back next time  
I'll carry your bath water in my tin jar  
Suck diamonds from your pussy  
As I drink from your crystal slipper  
Unchanged by my illusion  
I hope you carry me through the desert sands  
See, I'm not you lover,  
you can't make me approach you with  
handcuffs or possessions.

My circle is filled with wordsmiths;  
dream crafters and alchemists

Like Saul  
or is he the apostle Paul?

Walking through a Brooklyn mall  
with a forty-foot mouth and eighty-foot arm span  
Are you happy? He asks.

In these circles I stay protected  
rebuilding my heart like  
fulfillment of Ka

And what got done was the completion of the lunar eclipse  
I tasted her lips  
Tickled her nipples with my spotted tongue  
inviting me into paradise  
I dive in  
Both heads first  
Have you ever been underwater with a fish?  
Right below Atlantis is a bordello they call  
Liquid City  
I ran for office twice  
but only won in '69  
I still have the keys to the city  
I think I'll melt them down  
and braid you a molten necklace  
with some iron feathers  
so we can fly close to the sun  
And when I come  
your bed loses  
Its sheets  
your TV don't work  
when I come  
Mangoes are seasoned

I heard you saying love was a promise  
And promises are meant to be exposed

For the bullshit they produce  
Therefore I set you loose  
Off into the distant plain  
To come up behind you again  
wet silky ascension  
leaving me nothing else  
but this  
long fleeting  
illusion.

## Brave New World Dis-order

Out of body persona  
Disembodied by spite  
A platform for cowards, shut-ins,  
With no mouths

Introverted warriors,  
Bravest behind screens,  
Sharing opinions on things,  
From politics to movies,  
White privilege to Black Pride,  
Hidden behind private walls and windows.

Ghosts in shells,  
Alphanumeric vocabulary,  
With low margins of truth  
Reality television's oxymoron,  
Anonymous in public  
Camouflaged culture, in simulated war zones.  
Broken humans with  
Failing sight, smell and touch,  
The voiceless lose their emotions,  
Using smiley faces,  
Like buttons and emojis.

I joined the virtual parade in 2008,  
My defenses lowered  
For collective hypnosis,  
Click bait and rumors,  
The hive mind  
Reacting in real time.  
The gift and the curse,  
Pandora's golden box,  
All consuming and open  
Birthing new generations  
Unleashing the uncensored,

Online consumers,  
Internet drug users,  
Plastic artifacts,  
Built by typing fingers.

An attention economy,  
Monetized eyeballs,  
Researched and developed,  
Reinserted through white noise  
Buying products  
Not even needed.

Social order in disorder,  
Passing strange messages to  
Educated fools,  
Driving fast cars to oblivion.

I joined the virtual parade in 2008  
Let my fingers do the walking,  
When walking  
Was still my goal

A willing participant,  
In the call to consolidate  
Communal narcissists,  
Preachers with no pens,  
Toothless sharks in a sea of indifference,  
Manipulating zeros and ones.  
Melting humanity into a new intelligence,  
Born to this,  
Brave new world  
Dis-order.

## Optimist Prime

Work through it,  
Stop. Pain. Lift  
Work through it.  
Stop. Pain. Lift.

Be a robot  
Be *Optimist*

Monday.  
Shoulder press.  
95lbs/3 sets  
Wednesday.  
Arm curls.  
85lbs/3sets  
Friday.  
Leg Curls.  
130lbs/3sets

Work through it,  
Stop. Pain. Lift  
Work through it  
Walk. Stop. Pain. Lift

It burned/stitches tore open  
Blood bursts through bandage  
Veins popping with pain  
Through the wire.

Be a robot. Be *Optimist*.

Beat this  
Half-full  
Never empty  
Be a robot

Optimist. Fucking. Prime



# Testify

*From American Music*

I live in place of conservative anarchist  
Black republican strategist  
And intellectual panelist

The more I examine this  
The more I imagine this to be a dream  
A part of the surreal life  
When Flavor Flav  
Wanted Bridgette Neilson for a wife  
A part of Public Enemy on MTV  
The end of years of  
Revolutionary schemes  
We are finally all equal  
In the land of the free  
As long as we act the fool  
On MTV

Let me paint y'all a picture  
Form the belly of the beast  
Where the Terminator held a  
Political seat

Where celebrities are  
A new monarchy  
And the fans are  
The low life peasantry

Technology can change  
But human nature stays the same  
We've always been obsessed by this idea of fame  
But add big screens  
TV screens and Videos to the game  
And the weapons of mass distraction  
Have a new name

*America*  
*Can you hear it calling your name*  
*America*  
*Get your 15 minutes of fame*

*I want to testify*  
*About living life*  
*Inside of you*

Like Malcolm in Mecca  
Me and America  
Discovered each other  
Like brothers separated at birth  
At first it all seemed like an incredible dream  
Bionic Men  
Wonder Woman  
Super friends and movie screens  
*But as the daze went by*  
I changed and she changed  
She changed and I changed  
Raised on Captain Crunch and Hawaiian Punch  
I'm an American with a Muslim name

I, Sharrif Simmons, do solemnly swear  
To tell the truth  
Whole truth  
And nothing but the truth  
About life and as a young Black youth in America

*I want to Testify*  
*About living life*  
*Inside of you*

Now staying righteous here takes  
Passion like the Christ  
When you're constantly reminded  
You are a non-White  
Meaning your life will be filled with  
Struggle and strife

Even with a middle class past  
I'm still bustin' my ass  
All of my friends who graduated at the top  
Of their class  
Are still getting stepped over  
Like dogs in a park  
Just because of a complexion that's dark

They turned Pyramids to Projects (Askia Toure)  
Built castles made of sand  
And just like a test  
I cram to understand  
How you can have so much wealth  
And so much despair

An industrialized nation with no public health care  
So my teeth don't look like they did when I was young  
From all those years of Halloween and Hubba Bubba Gum

*As the daze went by*

I changed and she changed  
She changed and I changed  
Fast forward to the search for Saddam Hussein  
And I'm still an American with a Muslim name  
Now they going through my bags  
As I get on the plane  
Even searching through the one for my son  
What you think he got? A gun?

The land of the free  
And the home of the brave is an Empire  
Built on the backs of slaves

So I, Sharrif Simmons, do solemnly swear  
To tell the truth, whole truth and nothing but the truth  
About life as a young Black youth in America

I want to testify.

Sample Sample