

Patrick Sylvain



A Palace of Mourners

I've tried to store away
and refrain memories from surfacing,
but miniature Houdinis escaped
from opaque brain cells
that harbored a palace of mourners
from the country of my birth
where nightsticks have swung from Columbus
to modern avarice leaders whose nefarious
passions have cooked fear into our psyche.

After nights of past memories
poking needles in my sleep,
floods of images breached the silence
of my pen. Joseph, a 26-year-old journalist,
arrested in August of '92, demanded to speak.
My head became an echo-chamber
where the tales of the dead
and the brutalized reverberated.
Their screams, exploding
the coral of memories, forming
an enormous tapestry of narratives
and brutal images: like Joseph's blistered buttocks,
broken right knee, and cicatrices head.

The army wanted to teach his tongue
the language of silence.
Thin, glowing wires
turned his tongue into an eel,
slapping words to incomprehension.
Still, he did not swallow fear or confess.
His tongue trumpeted justice
despite his scars and inability to move bowels.

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Calabash

In light of this carnival
of nightsticks and stench,
I've desperately tried to write
about the movement of clouds
and pastoral images, but the screams
and agonies of a valley of Haitians
ferociously migrating to the center
of my pastoral scenes have torn up
the white lilies and the dandelions.
Instead of flowers,
my pen bled an agonizing nation.

