

Drisana Deborah Jack



Notes for an Emancipation Poem

in memento mori
in remembrance of those who came before
who made the crossing
coming coming in the belly of vessels of greed
packed on shelves forced intimacies
anger fear uncertainty condolences repulsion hunger desperation
yearning shame fear anger
chanting prayers to orishas carried under their tongues
now they come like a righteous prayer embracing Yemanja
raising her up and reigning her on our heads
tears to salt to drink
from the first sunrise in June to the last setting
in the 11th month in the year of our lord
-lord
she pays tribute to her offspring/sprung from decks of despair
the sick the weak the economic excess
thrown into her waiting embrace
an answer to fevered prayers

then new prayers are uttered in the
Ouatauba, the Bamboulay, the Ponum
busting chains with a shrug
wuking up freedom
in the grinding of hips
arms swaying, finger flicking flames in
flamboyant abandon
singing a Brim song
an be been a heaum buh massa been a hidum

in memento mori
we honor the mothers
who greased our hair with resistance
parting it hope and patience
braiding our story in royal rows
this for the women who kept
freedom warm between their thighs
nestled in their breast, shuddered behind lashes
nourished by a veil of tears

here's to men who would not see their women grieve
another day for children
ripped from arms
and lashed from wombs
men who would not see another brother quartered
refused to bring the shackles to hobble another's wings
the men who whispered the words of Oshun to their women making rivers run
caressing fingers
running waters, birthing water birthing rivers birthing passages middle passages
end passages the final passages
from enslavement
to emancipation
to independence

in memento mori
we wonder
why we must sacrifice
because freedom has never been a gift
to view a sunset on our own terms
so our children love themselves for just us or justice, not just so
so culture is not compromise
because freedom has never been a gift

because destiny demands it
apathy is the alternative
because freedom has never been a gift
if we don't our children will curse our name (they do already)
if we don't
we will anyway
die anyway
die
away

in memento mori
national symbols lay unearth
sacred sights are home to weeds
freedom path is a housing complex named after a plantation
the Boabab keeps her mystery
heroes names are whispered
a nation waits ... unclaimed

in memento mori
who, in remembrance,
will walk from the plantation
the house of orange

who will echo the footfall of the diamond 256, One-Tete-
Lokay, Felix Choisy, Carlos Cooks, Thomas Duruo (Derio),
Joseph Lake Sr., Arlett B. Peters, Alberic Richards and
Leonides Richardson, Mr. Priest "the sage of Marigot hill",
Joseph Lake Jr., Shujah, Alex Richards, Rhoda Arrindell,
Lasana Sekou, Charles Boromeo
Hodge
you
and say
we free
today

