

To Have A Name

by Alora Young

I wonder if a mother's love
Can be found on the second X chromosome
If God built a womb as a portal from heaven's own
If eve could have known
that womanhood was a power
That God never wanted to be revealed
But the forbidden fruit sewed
Eden into our DNA.

I wonder if Claudet Colvin knew
That something as simple as refusing to
Rise
could incite something prophesied in negro hymns for
centuries
If she knew her revolutionary movement
Would live
in the shadow
of rosa park's memory
Black womanhood
is being asked to bring gifts to Parties you were never
invited to
Its lighting everyone's candles with the fire alight in
you
It's standing in solidarity with women who didn't fight
for you
Because you know what oppression feels like
And I think that god just might
Love
like black women do.

My great great grandmother was enslaved
She took thoughts of freedom to her
unmarked grave
Her daughter stood alongside
Sisters for rights that would
never be hers in a lifetime
Revolution is
Imbedded in
My bloodline.
She couldn't have dreamed
What the next century brought in
The law,
in the hands of justice Jane Bolin
The First judge
In This country to be a
Black woman.
Changing a future she would never see.
Every
Vote we cast
should honor her memory.

Cast that ballot like that candle burning with
Ancestral flame
It is the legacy they fought for
Let them see what became
of the children
Of the country

Of the women
who got the chance
To have a name

If words are bullets then your ballot is a
Semi-
Auto
matic
It's the way your voice can shoot through the
silence
And
The
Static
If the sealing of your lips is far more
Than
Syste-
Matic
Look back
at all the mothers who wielded their weapons for *you*.

This holiday is an empty promise if we don't use it
To see there's more to our mission
Look at Atlanta's lines
Voting booths with locked shut doors
By governors with flimsy spines
My people who can't vote for
Nonviolent crimes committed back in 99,
I –
watch my sister's best friends go to prison.

I watch the boys I saw become
~~Men~~
become felons and lose every right
Our ancestors fought for.

I see pictures of today's suppressed voters in black
and white
So people still think this is
history.

It's not my tomorrow I'm fighting for
It's my daughters
I'll stand guard at her door
As grandma waded in the waters
Every vote is hope that no more of my blood
Will lie in unmarked graves.
It's the hope that my babies will always be called
By their names
(3 minute mark)
Burn your textbooks
if they tell you there's nothing
More to change.

Women the world has tried to silence are women who
Know what needs repair
Shirley Chisholm said if they don't give you a seat,
Bring.
A.
Folding.
Chair.

For black women,
this privilege has not been here for one hundred years
But when it comes to revolution ask Eartha, Angela,
we have always been
The pioneers
The love
my great-great-grandmother held for me from pasts
afar
Was strong
because it drew its power from and burned just like
The nearest star.

From Mallala
to Assata
from the classroom
to the polls
Womanhood and the suns fire
Reside
Inside
our souls
That through every election
And the world we change in kind
the garden in our bodies
will find solace in our minds
And the waters that we waded in
Bring joy in gentler times.

That my daughter
has the future eve,
and every other mother dreams
That Eden
will be
home again
And America
will be
redeemed.