

My I AM poem for Ray Dominguez

I am beautifully black women sheathed in deep dark splendidly smooth skin...beautifully black like plums...breasts dangling hanging but not strange fruit...feeding beautiful black babies pleasuring the fathers who selflessly sowed their seeds...bodies strong and stern limbs long and lanky, lips thick and full, nose broad and wide, eyes bright and round like the sun that blackens their skin, so black it's bright, shining illuminating a light that's blinding...brass and beads silver and gold adorn and adore them...their hair a beautifully kinky coiled coarse mangled mass of majesty the epitome of their strength...Sampson mocks her and Jesus was made in her image...she stolen stripped drug across brazen bronze beaches reaching out for her fathers brothers uncles...men who lost their manhood standing there naked hopeless helpless haplessly watching their wives mothers sisters beaten raped humiliated before their eyes needing to do something, reaching out in their hearts screaming in silence yearning trying to break the bonds that bind their will... and they were still strong and I am them...shipped over seas stacked one on top of the other on top of the other on top of the other surviving breathing ingesting smelling dieing in each other's feces in each other's urine in each other's vomit in each other's spit, in each other's blood, one on top of the other on top of the other on top of the other...and they waded in water waiting on Moses...and they sang negro spirituals as some kind of osmosis for living on a plantation for submitting to segregation listening to lynch promote self degradation and they sang negro spirituals remaining humane under an inhumane situation...and Nat Turner must've been my daddy cause I am the revolt headed north keeping the movement moving...

I am Harlem and the Renaissance...painting writing jazzing dancing owning my own... creating community living life through the arts and being beautifully brilliant and being beautifully black which is a masterpiece all by itself...I am once riding in old Baltimore heart-filled head-filled with glee and they seemed to be staring at the dark, but their eyes were watching God, and they were told to go tell it on the mountain top that they'll face the murderous cowardly pack pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back...I am Zora Neale Hurston and Claude McKay, Countee Cullen and Langston Hughes cause I too sing America and when they see how beautifully black I am, they won't tell me to go eat in the kitchen...I am James Baldwin and the fire next time...Richard Wright and the native son...I am Alice Walker and who can walk by the color purple and not see God in it? I am Nina Simone and Mississippigotdamn...Ella Fitzgerald and a tisk it a task it...I am Josephine Baker and Dizzy Gillespie Sarah Vaughn and Cab Calloway dee doo dee wop scat tat doo wop...I am Pearl Bailey and Billy Holiday strange fruit on strange trees...I am Lena Horne and Ethel Waters, Bojangles and Fats Waller... I am Jacob Lawrence and William Johnson, the Souls of Black Folks and W.E.B., Jean Toomer and Booker T. and I am gathering myself by my bootstraps and keeping the movement moving in Cotton Clubs and the Apollo Theater speakeasies and rent parties...

I am freedom fighters and freedom riders revolutionaries and civil rights martyrs...my fathers are Martin Luther Kings and Medgar Evers, Malcolm and Steven Biko, Stokely Carmichael...they're Huey P. Newton and Nelson Mandela, Bayard Rustin, Ruchell Magee, a New Jersey Turnpike and Sundiata history in text books don't tell all about 'em... unsung heroes but never forgotten like the mothers who fought right beside them... I'm daughter of Rosa, Myrlie and Coretta, Angela Davis, Fannie Lou and Ella, Elaine Brown and Sister Souljah...I am Assata Shakur a revolutionary with a revolutionary cause and I must pause...to pump

my fist...to a Hispanic brother on most folks' shit list cause Fidel Castro didn't trip when he granted Assata asylum...and I am those four little girls in the Birmingham Church...who didn't know they were suspects at birth...and being black was like being cursed... along with going to Sunday School and learning about a white Jesus, a blonde Jesus, a blue-eyed Jesus who resembled the likings of those who hated them but they turned the other cheek and embraced their pink sisters and brothers considered nigger lovers standing in arms singing we shall overcome as if they ever had to fight to overcome anything...I am the Little Rock Nine busboycotts and sitins...I am the Dream that Martin envisioned...the SCLC and the NAACP...I am the Black Panther Party a revolutionary holding grasping bearing arms walking down Oakland threatening to harm any pig that gets in the way of my revolutionary thoughts and my directing beautiful black people on revolutionary walks...and I say...say it out loud I'm black and I'm proud and I say black is beautiful and I say power to the people and I say to be young gifted and black and I say lift ev'ry voice and sing...and I dare anybody to silence me...and though the Last Poets said the revolution won't be televised I am the attempt at taking the blind fold of the eyes of those who welcome change who invite it embrace it and want to interrupt white America with it...I say come on and go with me...put on your traveling shoes and let's ride cause I am Plessy v. Ferguson and Brown v. Board...I am the North Star and the Drinking Gourd...I am Harriet Tubman who laid down the pavement...for the movement...so let's collect all of the brilliantly blazing black people and charge them to keep the movement moving and encourage no one to stay still...

I am ill like hip-hop and shell tops break dancing and be-pop, electric slide and the robot the chicken head and pop-lock...I am fight the power and 100 miles and running running running...I am purple rain and Stephanie Mills, Afrika Bambaata and Sugar Hill...I am Fat Albert and the Junk Yard Gang...Ladies First and Cop Killer Self Destruction Public Enemy and Thriller...I am a gangSTAR wearing jeri curls and faded tops, cross colors and reeboks...I am east coast and west coast niggas who forgot that beautiful black people were stolen stripped and drug across brazen bronze beaches sold and shipped over seas one on top of the other on top of the other on top of the other paving the way so that they can have freedom...I am now-a-laters and lemon heads pickled pigs feet and pickled eggs...the kind that soaks in a big ol jar full of red...vinegar sitting on top of the counter in Perry's corner convenient store...I am nigga please and that's my nigga...hop scotch and I left my boyfriend at the candy store...I am everybody singing dancing to the music while I sit in the back bedroom wanting wishing trying to figure out how I can ease my way into the living room and cut a rug with my parents and their adult friends pretending to be a hippie a flower girl smoking reefer and making memories...I am Yo MTV Raps! Different Strokes and Good Times...Doin the Butt the Alf and bump-n-grind...I am Black History Month and reports on Jesse Jackson...I am aaaaction...and not knowing the rest of the words cause I am an American black and the lyrics are in patwa...I am collard greens and chitterlings fried chicken and turkey wings...I am Arsenio Hall and afro picks...double dutch and you-are-not-it...I am Ebony Jet and Word Up Magazine...coconut yoo-hoo and Muslims selling bean...pies...I am the movement making sure that Black doesn't die...so throw your fists in the sky and pump those black beauties real high...like waving your hands in the air and wavin' 'em like you just don't care...cause if you like being black and you know it's all that...let me hear you say oh yea...

Kendra Nicole
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