Letter to My City

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Abstract

In this poem-letter the speaker addresses their hometown, a place of familiarity and contradiction. Through exploring the dark past of Southern North Carolina an intimate account of living in community is illustrated.

Keywords

Home, city, familiarity, lineage, longing
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My city is the one segregated  
around high school with packed classrooms  
and stolen-back history lessons filled with praying  
for souls of slaves thrown into mass graves  
plentiful and robust like fertilizer for the land—  
bodies used as fodder with  
familiar hair and lips  
and fingernails  
all pressed close in dirt nameless.

Days spent weeping with classmates,  
imagining our own bodies slaved and dirt-packed  
or sunken into the deep, supposing who of us  
unstrong enough to die without our people;  
I go back to 2016 election aftermath, us terrified  
and clinging to each other woven  
give me again something to weave  
around, let me be weak again, submissive, arms of arms of arms of  
everyone around  
grasping on to each other  
take me back to busted sidewalks and gunshots and long ass bus rides  
take me back by the corner shop, the nail salon next to the beauty supply  
and circle around a few times, let me look around for a while.