

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.