

poetry anthology I

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Achieng Duro | Ayoola Goodness | Ndaba Sibanda | Gordon B. Anjili

| Kenya | Nigeria |

Achieng Duro

a Folk Song

Tar little baby don't you cry,
or the popos gonna put you to sleep tonight,
and if you cry or try to fight,
then their grips gonna get a bit more tight,
and just as you sip into the light,
Its gonna dawn on them that you had rights,
So my tar little baby please don't cry,
So mummy may have just one more night.

Ayoola Goodness

#blacklivesmatter

When does an act of worship
Become *a weapon of asphyxiation?*

Each time my knees greet the ground, I burn with
Grief: my body, a *solemn revolution*.

My breath stops. Instead of God, my eyes
See *George fighting for breath*.

Silence bursts into my mouth, my bones:
Fragile twigs breaking beneath.

I touch again the soul of solemnity, *it is stormy*.

I am unclasping from a *white weight*;

Every hand aiding me is a black man holding
His breath in protest.

Screaming, *I can't breathe*.

during the Sermon, the Pastor Says Black Is For Funerals

When he says it, the tone grips. Scars
My skin color; jet-black sepulchers erect as Goosebumps.

In his voice, a *stereotyped importunity* sits.

Each word, in plethora echoes, returns, torturing
Every breath of freedom to (b)r(e)athe in this skin;

What it means to be black: accidentals, *an artifact*
For point-shooting,

A skin of darkness, a shroud of ruins,

A yearning for flowers; or the perfect night sky

Embroidered in stars?

The moment we rise to sing the hymn, the choir
All donned in harmonious black is *Black Rising*.

I, the organist, my fingers softly
Tendering the keys; the full chords meld, sustaining
All the names *of black lives lost to racial injustice*.

In the interlude, I hear all the protests. *I hear all the protests.*

In the calm:

A black man repeatedly shot by police in Wisconsin in
Front of his screaming children pops up on my Facebook Watch.

In my head, giant *silence and a funeral song* echo.

Ndaba Sibanda

how They Received Him

He was moving from door

to door asking citizens
to give him a big vote
so that he could become
their next prime minister

They chuckled and looked
at him as if they thought:
here's a man on a mission
to count the number of hairs
on our bodies in a split second!

dealing With Attitudes

A court judge made
the following remarks:

a privileged people should
have a duty and a conscience

that says we cannot be
the immortal beneficiaries
of the imbalances of the past

because we are living in the present
with its demands for equity and equability

Gordon B. Anjili

out of Kibera

I toiled to save,
God knows I toiled,
The times were tough,
In this tax-happy land;
But I saved enough,
I set up a stall,
I sold fresh fish from our Lake.

A few people bought my fish,
And many more came,
And many more and more came,
And my children went to school,
And I moved out of a mud-walled shack;
And I had a dream to move out of Kibera.

Then a few people bought my fish,
And many more did not come;
And many more and more did not come,
And my childred dropped out of school,
Like unripe fruits from a tree —
Fish from China was cheap:
Will I ever move out of Kibera?

N/B Kibera is the largest slum in Eastern Africa

Achieng Nyar Duro, aka AND or Duro, is a Woman of Letters from Nairobi, Kenya. Having taken her first bic to7