

Waking Up in Ferguson

By Jordana Rubenstein-Edberg

Woke up this mornin, earth in my bones
Woke up this mornin, wounds running red
Woke up this morning, words on my tongue

Black boy, betta run

If only I could peel skin like scales, give it to you, run like the wind in front of you
Black boy you're in danger and we all know it
Hello I'm white girl and my reality is living as a city pearl
Touch me and CNN knows, hurt me and The New York Times posts
"White Girl, not living a perfect life"

Black boy you're at your height because statistically you're going soon
Is it because you're holy that god wants you back to sing a choir tune?
Is it because you're worthy that you're another young saint?

Skin dark as the soil black boy run until melon suns eat your shadow
Run until skittles and hoodies mean more to a gun than your heart
Black boy, you have to run and we all know it

Woke up this mornin, wings on my feet
Woke up this mornin, wind on my back
Woke up this morning, heard a voice say

Black boy, get gon'

Folks talk bout the black boy like he's born for goin
They say, Boy get so gon you ain't got no one to call you black anymore
They say, Go so deep, ain't nothing but black,
you're just another piece in a long line of dark

They say, Boy you sure went fast but shoot you been trainin your whole life
You ran the way only a black man can, they say,
black man who's been born on running who's been eating while runnin,
whose food is feet slapping in sweat
they say, You ain't stopping and it's only karma who says
"wait til' the next life, you won't do in this one"

Woke up this mornin, no flight in my feet
Woke up this mornin, lord please pray for me
Woke up this morning, a ghost spoke to me

Black boy, you've gone

I heard a black baby called obituary boy cuz he was born for the afterworld
Mama gave birth to him knowing death and tomorrow mean the same thing for him
I heard a saliva filled, diaper shittin baby called a soldier, like he was sacrificing for a cause,
for a god, not just another black baby thrown out in the blood water
Cuz he'll only be known as a black baby, a black boy, and maybe, a black man

White women white men little white children line the block like sand
Watching.
Watching.
Ground up at the mercy of holy water, us white folks gon and dun' it again
Us White folks gon' an' dun' it again
We make excuses,
We say there's "lives at stake"
Well I say, there's only one life and he's not on a stake he's in a coffin with a bullet
He's black and that's not an accident
He's black boy and that's not a metaphor
He is a black boy and his mama prepared his coffin before she made his crib

We say phrases like, "it's complicated", "there's factors to consider,"
We repeat those phrases so often you'd think it was a round, a call and response song

Call; black man
respond; run
respond; shoot
respond; court case
respond; dropped court case
respond; repeat call respond repeat call respond: repeat call respond repeat call respond
repeat call respond: repeat call respond repeat repeat repeat repeat repeat repeat repeat repeat
repeat repeat repeat repeat repeat repeat repeat repeat repeat repeat repeat repeat repeat

Black boy, betta run

Our skin is oceans deep,
blood running veins mapping our bodies, our skin continents
because we have all been running, we have all crossed oceans
We are all immigrants.
Only brown skin is made to feel like generations of blood means nothing
Only brown skin is treated as a constant illegal crossing of the border.

We are all, Running.

Woke up this mornin, heart in my hands
Opened my skin see, the darkness in me
Looked at my feet now, they're broken and raw

We all, must run

What's in a Man

By Dariel Vasquez

What's in a man.

What's in a man, past his flesh and bone, past that gasp rasp when he screech his tone

What's in a man that hides his insecurities behind a strong facade, no disguise

I mean... what's in a man when he's all alone

When those brick walls cave in and he can't find a phone to send a message of his pain so he carves it in stone

What's in a man when he has so much to hide

When he sees freedom across a boarder but it's just a mirage

What's buried deep inside when he has to abide by the same rights he's denied by, this cell he was born in, this cell where we've all been

What's in a man deeper than the color of his skin

What's in a man that drives him to sin

What's in a man when he has to become a man behind a prison cell

What's in a man when it's harder to find a job than find drugs to sell

What's in a man that shares secrets only his anger can tell

What's in man when he can't find the voice to yell when he fell

Fallen, past his last breath of respiration and no dedication can detain the temptations or desperation of every form of self degradation when survival leads to incarceration or a false emancipation

When a hoodie or baggy pants leads to decapitation

And he's told he has to kill or be killed when this generation only knows the sensation of being forced to survive in this lynching ground we call a nation

...What's in a man that gives him the strength to persevere

What's in a man that makes him choose success, though the side effects are more severe

What's in a man when he has to live in fear

What's in a man when he only finds happiness after 6 cases of beer

What's in a man when his drug addicted mother knows her death draws near

What's in a man that makes him want to kill, I wonder if it's how that hunger feel

I wonder if it's how that sin feel

To steal life with a fully loaded steel
I wonder if it's a painless feel
Still humming dreams of a pierced heart made of steel
Still still in shock we mask our tears in disguise
Still still Ms. Angelo, still I rise
Still we sing still, a freedom song from black lips no constraint can seal
Still I rise like Maya, every man should take a couple pages from a queen's book
And I wonder what's in a man after all they done took
So what's in a man when they took his name
What's in a man when they took his joy and administered pain
What's in a man when they say he should feel no shame
What's in a man when they say we're all the same
What's in a man that makes his heart beat fast when a cop pats him down
What's in a man that makes his heart beat slow when a cop shoots him down
I wonder what his last thoughts are...
I bet that last gasp will give him strength to believe
But I, I, I, CAN'T BREATHE
I wonder what's in me
that made me live this long
And my brothers sit behind bars or gunned down with a bullet, Crazy I'm the one living with
the scars all black men are
I wonder what's in a man after he's come so far
But feels so empty inside