

...In Short Breaths

Haiku Poetics
by
Tshombe Sekou

Introduction

There is no greater reflection than that of self, a quest into the truth of one's past regardless of how dark the history is. When a child is alienated from the womb from which it was drawn—estranged from the breast of its mother; it somehow knows there is something not yet tangible that it yearns for in her—that is what afro-ancestral history is to us lost children who made no exodus journey back; we who remained in the land of our oppression. We have made much from the scraps left to us, however, none large enough to satisfy that which has been razed in the process arriving to who and where we are now; for if we were to measure league by league, nautical knot by knot; there is much lost in the wake...

*...In short breaths
we spread our wings
and soar.*

It would be a grave error to hide our story in efforts to save our children from the ugly past that brought us here, to the shores we now call home; the endured atrocities that plagued a nation, only so that they would be inured to the place we are in now because we are ashamed. Those who forget are easily reminded through repeat history.

—Tshombe Sekou

1/28
We earth granite
majestic rulers...
...honoring youth and ancestry
//
free until stolen
from the opulent belly
of our mother...

2/28
Danced with enriched souls
Beneath heaven's eye
Seeing not the monsters approach

3/28
tethered,
by generations razed
the ocean split us

4/28
Atlantic pantheon
the wind a supplication
for our enslaved ancestors

5/28
Ripped from the resting
of her womb—slung across ocean
to suckle oppressive breast

6/28
We stood on alien shores,
sold in their furnaces
that now warms our bellies

7/28
Seven winds,
drums in holy song;
Memories of home sung

8/28
Cotton & sugar,
Fabric of our life
Threaded in blood

9/28

Beaten not broken,
Broken, still strong;
Strong enough to remember...

10/28

Break the knot,
The sun will float away...
petals lost to a rose.

11/28

We've been away,
Now the sun seems far;
We'll follow the stars.

12/28

North we run,
away from the rum
breath that hunts us.

13/28

Weaved and patched
our pain and blood stained
memories to freedom.

14/28

pioneered the future,
braved our past;
Only to be denied history.

15/28

The diaspora
left us wanderers—segregated,
abhorred more in "freedom".

16/28

Freedom,
What a funny taste
when the air is polluted.

17/28

Fought for rights,
In a land of equality;
the civility of former masters.

18/28
Men killed for ideas,
Dreams left to see—adrift,
Generations of revolutions...

19/28
Marched—our feet waged war,
Our convictions fueled it;
The peace was in our dreams.

20/28
Our souls set afire,
There hoses were gasoline;
we spit last poetry as prophets.

21/28
As children dreaming,
our mother conjured
in afros and fist.

22/28
we were war
and peace
all at once.

23/28
Slave ships divided us,
while denominations
segregated our unity.

24/28
Injected with dope,
Sang our blues,
sweated our woes in disco.

25/28
Tree roots fertilized
in the spirit of our blood,
forced to bare our bodies as jewelry.

26/28
We've traded shackles
for our women
In exchange for polluted ice.

27/28

Hip-hop offered freedom,
emerging from the womb
of revolutionary poetry.

//

The ocean muffled
our drums,
So we turned to drum machines...

28a/28

Harlequins & athletes
became our idolatry; who
honors our ancestral paragons today?

28b/28

A diachronic tongue;
we spoke freedom once,
now we auction it as we were.

#29

we leap,
broom for groom & bride
We live on gathered memories...

//

...in short breaths,
between pain & death;
we live...

Dedication

To all the things lost in the ocean,
the souls who cast themselves as buoys—markers
to the way home...

...who choose the deep as their grave
than to be enslaved, branded like cattle;
to those who braved their rage to battle
injustice and denigration, challenged
a nation who held things to be self-evident...

To the poets,
the prophets,
and messengers;
the then and now
blues and fire spitters.
to Baba and Ume
who lived enough to lend
themselves to the future.

To my wisdom (wife),
the daughter who's name
is yet ineffable as those
who go unspoken in our
history; the conscious of consciousness
to the completion of the circle...

~

will we remember
who we are now
in the future...

Selah!

Acknowledgement

First and foremost the only acknowledgement that is deserving, is that of you; the one who makes this poesy possible; it through your imagination and exploration that these poetic expressions gain life—thank you!

*We see in the sun—light
The night—infinity
In us—truth*

Author



A literary and oral poetry expressionist born in New Orleans, raised in Israel; Tshombe Sekou at a young age began to express interest in art, but most importantly his love for jazz and poetry; though he did not write a poem until his early thirties, he was no stranger to writing essays and other compositions. Known for his philosophical references and intellectual writings, he has been the invitational speaker at many venues around the world. Tshombe has released more than a half-dozen audio compositions of poetry and jazz, and appears in more than a dozen collaborative releases.

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