

Archive & Issues





Safe Space

by Jasmine Combs

Yesterday there was no indictment.

Yesterday, the verdict read not guilty

while 17 entry wounds

in a black boy's back still hummed.

When we chanted his name in the streets

and the pavement shattered from our vibrato.

Yesterday the cops dragged a black girl to her grave.

When we chanted her name

it echoed,

streets so empty

the sidewalk threw her name back at us,

and it sounded like mine.

Yesterday an Asian kid said nigga

a Latina mother drowned
her dark skinned babies in bleach,
a white girl cornrowed her hair, called it ratchet,
and my relaxer burns resurfaced
to witness the gentrification
of my scalp.

Yesterday, a man pulled a graveyard of
little black girls out his closet,
paraded them on stage
doused in an old song,
and the crowd still sang along
for nostalgia's sake.

Today, my black woman is a blanket
I can't come from under.

Today, all of the ways that I might die
are too heavy,

This bed, the only place
the bullseyes can't find me.

Today, I didn't think I would survive
until a friend invites me to her place, promises whisky
so I un-dig my casket, drag myself
to a house full of black women

Today we fashion safety
from a pearled blunt and a playlist
with the volume so high
we can barely hear all that hates us.
And we dance a black girl's dance,
our shades of brown converging
like a rainbow in an oil slick.
I don't know the girl sitting next to me
but we both know all the words to this song
so I crown her 'sister.'
In her eyes,
the same sad and tired reflected in mine,
but her mouth holds a vice grip on joy,
smile like rain in the middle of a drought.

Yesterday I figured God had forsaken us
But today I found God in a trap song
in a wine glass whirling her magic around the room
in a conversation about hair or lovers.
and when oppression worms it's way into our conversation
we make a joke of it,
laughing in the face of death is
our oldest form of survival

might've died an unjust death.

But, their story won't make the news until tomorrow

so today, let sorrow be an unfamiliar language.

Dance, like you don't know the whole world's out to get you.

Black girl,

let every living breath be a rebellion,

a song

that only we know

all the words to,

and ain't that a triumphant sound?

[Read all work by Jasmine Combs](#)

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