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Black is being: a poetry series

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Black is being: a poetry series

Chantel J. Vereen

Content warning: death, anti-Blackness, racism, war on Black bodies

Note: an audio recording of “Black is being: a poetry series” is available in our online journal at <https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/tvc/>

I.

Breathing is a privilege
Living doesn't come easy
Matter is the minimum

II.

I wake up
Black and beautiful but living in segregated worlds
Where I have to love lighter
And I have to be brighter

Just to fit
Just to be seen

I'm holding onto my Blackhood
It's clenched to my chest

But white-hot hands burn my skin
And our prying at my blackness

Black hearts are barely beating
Black mouths are constantly screaming

Chantel J. Vereen is a graduate student in the Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration master's program at the University of Vermont. Chantel grew up in Central Islip, NY and completed her B.A. in Professional Writing at York College of Pennsylvania.

You love our culture
But our skin
Will never be enough

III.

Erasing the past
Means disregarding the facts.
That white rage runs deep.

When wishing on sunsets in summer gowns
Means running through sundown towns.
Not sure if you'll see the light of day

When daily walks mean
Being stalked by white walkers who want you caught.

And you're watching the barrel
Of that gun right between your eyes
With no hesitation

Any sudden moves
Leaves deadly grooves

IV.

Black pain
Black tears
Seep into classrooms
In staff meetings

But no one bats an eye

Whiteness enters and gets to persist
The prickled sensation of dread
Trickles down my spine
When privilege and ignorance of others cloud my vision

I raise my hands
In defense
In defeat

But I'm invisible
And I'm powerless

Then suddenly
Without my consent
I become white noise

V.
We are Black Women
Filled with light
Swirling in starlight
Gazing triumphantly

Skin tight with resilience
Bathed in honeysuckle
Cloaked in lavender
Sweetened by the sun

We are women
Dressed in brown sugar
Slick in coconut oil
Lathered in unapologetic gold