



BY: AALIYAH BERRY

# BITTER SWEET

Collection of Poems

# Hoodoo

beauty blooms, a lotus in the bayou  
Unknown resilient and true, in shadows she grew  
Laying still in the marshy lagoon,  
a mystical view.

She casts her hoodoo, a spell so rare,  
Mysteries woven in the humid air,  
Speaking in tongues, banish the bad juju,  
With each word, her power grew.

Underneath the stars, she hears the blues,  
Nina Simone's voice and Langston Hughes  
They become her muse.

She's the lotus that dreams,  
The land of milk and honey, so to speak.  
With faith unshaken, she casts her spells ahead,  
In her heart, dreams of freedom are fed.

The sun gifts her spells hue,  
Vibrant, unyielding, forever true.  
Never wilting, never fading away,  
In reclaiming her roots, she finds her way.



*Free-Verse*  
**Constructions**

Her story begins in a courtroom  
We wait for our call  
Check the boxes they consume  
You are a product above all

Constructions mold my being  
We wait for our call  
Three strikes spreeing  
Manufactured by all

Identities woven together  
To oppress or entitle  
My life is vital for your pleasure  
The call is homicidal

My life a pawn in a game so vast  
which one of me will last  
Women, Black and gay  
Who must I betray

We wait for our call in silent plea,  
Yearning for a chance, to finally be free.  
Who will break the Master's House?





Afro

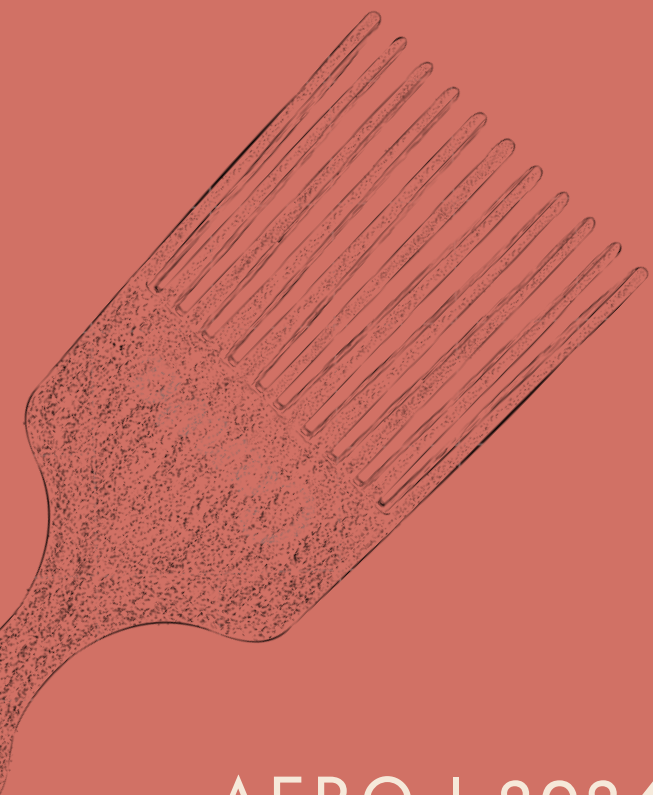
Sonnet:

Tight coils, shrunk into a full afro's embrace,  
Wild of beauty, shaped like a tree's grace.  
Amidst the chatter of what should not be worn,  
I find solace in this crown that's free.

Through the whispers, through the eyes that scorn,  
My afro blooms, its beauty worn  
Nappy, they say, as if it's a crime,  
Yet within my coils, I find my rhyme.

For each curl tells a tale of pride,  
In every kink, my strength resides.  
So let them talk, let them judge and stare,  
My afro's love, I'll always wear.

In reclaiming what they try to demean,  
I find the essence of my self-esteem.





Ālm  
awt albaṭī  
means Slow  
Death where 30,000  
Bodies lay beneath.  
No gauze can heal  
The wounds so deep  
Mutilated children,  
but we can only weep.  
Famine is a Slow death  
you can't Imagine. Yazan  
al-Kafarneh only 10 years  
young. Many more unsung  
families shattered, dreams  
undone, underneath Gaza's  
unforgiving sun. Palestinians  
are only human. Plunged into  
oblivion. Their voices silenced &  
tears unseen. America desensitized  
By "terrorist" deaths for a zionist  
state. In the rubble of conflict they  
strive to survive. While the world  
turns a blind eye, refuses to  
revive. Stuck in Gazas strip  
slowly dying. No gauze  
can heal their calls  
that are crying. Alma  
wt albatī i cant be  
Justified. For in,  
Gazas midst,  
Hope must  
survive . and  
in unity.  
may peace  
finally  
Thrive.

# الموت البطيء (Slow Death).

## DA AFTERLIFE | 2024

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We da Afterlife  
Keepin' echo of history alive  
I'm feelin' like a stranga, natal-alienation  
Oppressed for my skin  
Ain't no love for me here, ain't none over there,  
Lost in dis world, feelin' da despair.

I be a stranga, I aint have a homeland.  
Sometimes all I feel is slavery's weight,  
But I'm da fruit my ancestors create.  
Ghana, Congo, Nigerian, Cameroon, and Senegal in my veins  
Dey strength run deep, in my DNA's chains.

Dis language ain't my own,  
Colonized down to da bone.  
AAVE tagged as broken speech,  
Told, "You gotta talk proper," dey preach.  
F\* that dis is what my mama teach

From birth, my path been stained  
Through da years I will not be tamed  
Da negro always hustles to stay alive

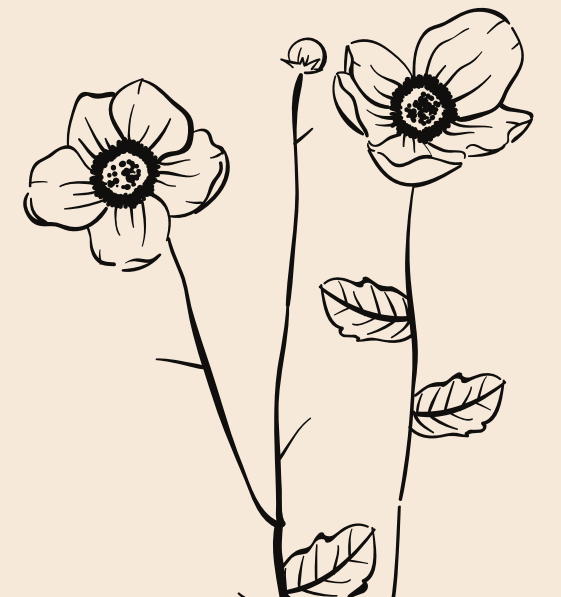
From the age of five I knew you were a liie  
The world's deceitful whispers, they tried to sly  
But in my heart, I held onto truth's light,  
Guided by ancestors, shining bright.  
I know now i'm not alone  
I may be a stanger but I know my home

Through the years and centuries,  
From the sea of treachery,  
To the decades of penitentiary,  
I am their memory,  
da afterlife of slavery.

In every space, I will take my place  
We will not be erased  
our legacy we'll embrace.  
For we are the resilience, da strength, the pride,  
In unity, our voices can't be denied.

We da Aftelife, echoes of the past,  
Our spirit endures, forever steadfast.  
Through da trials and da pain, we rise,  
In every heart, our spirit lies.

## DA AFTERLIFE





## Hidden voices



WALKING TO CLASS  
I WATCH THE WOMEN MARCH STEADFAST  
SCREAMAING FOR GENDER EQUALITY  
AND THE USUAL IDEOLOGY...

THIER FACES WERE HOMOGENOUS  
*PORCELIAN WHITE.*  
THEY WORE THE COLOR PURUPLE  
REPRESENTING WOMEN FOR ALL RIGHT?

LULULEMON AND STARBUCKS IN HAND,  
WHAT THEY DEMAND, IT'S QUITE CLEAR,  
WASN'T EXACTLY MY CUP OF TEA, I FEAR.

FOR IN THIS SEA OF PRIVILEGE AND CHEER,  
THERE'S IRONY IN THEIR CHANT SO SINCERE.  
FOR WHEN RACE AND CLASS DISAPPEAR FROM SIGHT,  
WHAT REMAINS IN THEIR FIGHT?

SEGREGATION INGRAINED, UNSEEN,  
INSTITUTIONS DEAF TO VOICES KEEN,  
OUR SOLUTIONS, MERE WISPS IN THE WIND,  
HOW CAN TRUE CHANGE BEGIN?

BEING COMPLICIT, NOT AN OPTION, WE FIND,  
CENTERING ALL WOMEN'S VOICES, THE BIND,  
IN DIVERSITY & UNITY, WE ARE ALIGNED,  
FOR TRUE CHANGE, IT'S TIME WE REMIND.



*the tree was always there. covered by the white heavy fog in the cold abyss. the tree stood there, its skeletal silhouette stuck in place. it sang a song. a song so familiar guiding me to its feet. i breathe in, feeling the oppressive air cling to my lungs. what do i do. i raise my trembling hand to its trunk. its skin textured cracked and veined. its brown tattered bark melted with my limb. fitting into the grooves of the crusted wood. now bonded. we became one. its scars whispered stories of forgotten sorrows. and as the tears fell from my eyes, mingling with the mist that hung heavy in the air, for in that moment, what had been passed down to me, i felt the weight of the stories of those who had suffered before me. i wanted to run, to hide from the truth that surrounded me, to escape the pain that threatened to consume me. but i knew that there was no escaping the reality of suffering, no running from the history that had shaped me into who i am. the tree showed me strange fruit hanging by its branches, bodies laying on its wood and the bodies laying next to its roots. i no longer wanted to run away with a heavy heart, i released my grip on the tree's trunk, stepping back into the swirling fog that enveloped us. and as i turned to leave, i carried with me the weight of a burden shared by generations past, a burden that whispered of pain and sorrow.*

## THE TREE

