

Zenaida Peterson
Martin Luther King Jr.
Day Contest
12/12/14

'Marrow Leader

“We shall overcome!”
We sang with our hands
weaved through freedom
in the dark

There was outrage there
friends and strangers there
with freedom in our fingers

We heard no indictment
was not surprised
was just as outraged
as we was not surprised

He heard us say:
“We have come to this hallowed spot
to remind America of the fierce urgency of Now.
This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off
or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism”

Martin Luther King Jr.

They called him the ‘marrow leader
Who is ours?
did he lay on the ground for 4.5 hours
without medical attention?
did he say I cannot breathe 11 times?
does he have hope?
does she march?
does she shake in her sleep?
does she remember?

Is our ‘marrow leader here?
in this crowd in front of the state house?

Looking out over the officers, the street and the commons
wondering if this is what Martin Luther King felt,
when he looked over the Washington Mall
in 1963, talking about dreams
the ones he only dared to have awake

When they assassinated Mike Brown God said
“America has given the negro people a bad check
one that is marked insufficient funds

When they assassinated Eric Garner God said
we refuse to believe the bank of justice is bankrupt”

he said you are the penny they could not hide anymore
they have stolen too much

God is Black, has always been Black

When they assassinated Martin Luther King Jr.
God said: you were right
“their destiny is tied up with our destiny.
they have come to realize that their freedom
is inextricably bound to our freedom.”

That until we are free, they will not see freedom
that until we see justice, they will not know justice

His speech is as fresh as yesterday,
because we have not yet
been able to sing America the Beautiful honestly

They took life away from those men
but we found it in each other,

“where is our path of sunlit justice”
We screamed on highways across the world.

We were in Washington, Ferguson, New York
Court House steps, in Congress, in our beds
We are in London, South Africa, Argentina, on buses

we are still there

and “we are not satisfied”
He said.
“We can never be satisfied
as long as the Negro is the victim
of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality.”

1963 was not an end but a beginning
2015 is not an end but a beginning

We are what democracy looks like
We are overcoming
god left freedom in our fingers

she said use it wisely so we stood in the middle of
our streets holding onto strangers like our survival depended on it
because it did.