Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Mary Rogers-Grantham: Two Poems

Mary Rogers-Grantham · Tuesday, August 9th, 2022

No Guarantee

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No guarantee you'll live to finish your high school years.
     Vulnerability keeps company with you every day.
No guarantee you'll pursue your dreams—career, family
     and old age. They are menaces to privilege.
No guarantee you'll live after being stopped because "You fit the
     description of ... ." A common and useful echo for damnation.

No guarantee you'll wake up refreshed in the morning
     after going to bed in your own home.
No guarantee you'll make your destination or your return,
     because fear threatens hope with the dare to live.
No guarantee you'll reap any of the benefits of jogging,
     living longer is one of them.

Every day is a new day, and every day is a Black day
     detrimental to Black males, detrimental to Black females.
Every day is injurious, when the interruption of the breath
     blown into the creation image, the beginning of living souls.
Every day, mothers pray their children return safe and sound-
     home to her or home to their place of residence.

What it means to be an American rekindles the sounds
     of yawning arguments. What are the results?
What it means to be Black in America remembers
     yesterday's grief. Why is grief our testament today?
What it means to be American is to be the prototype
     with favor. Other folks need to hyphenate.
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What follows *because*?

i.

Dear Reader—

My name is … . **Fill in the blank.** The name changes
far too often. Sorry I can't meet you in person.
Sorry I'm not there to tell you a story. Mama is sorry, too.

Sorry countless numbers of brothers who look like me
are murdered *because*.
Fill in the blank.

What follows *because*?
Police thought he was reaching for a gun.
Was it his ID? Driver license? Registration?

What follows *because*?
Police said he fits a description.
Of every Black mama's son?

What follows *because*?
Police had a search warrant to enter his residence.
Looking for what wasn't there?

What follows *because*?
Police felt threatened by his disorganized answers.
Was he a victim of a mental health disorder?

What follows *because*?
Police said…Police said…Police said…
Fill in the blank.

Start over. And then, start over again.

ii.
Dear Reader—

Something goes wrong between my hands and my hue,
My mama, family, pastor, friends, agree – both are
the introduction to the round of bullets to my head,
the introduction to the round of bullets to my back,
the introduction to the round of bullets to my body,
anywhere deemed fit for the death of my Blackness.

I wish my bullets could talk. They could tell my mama
the truth. They could tell my family the truth. They could
tell the jury the truth. They could tell the attorneys the truth.
They could tell the judge the truth. But, they cannot talk.
They are cold lifeless lead, shells waiting to happen.
We were warm blood Black males waiting to happen.

Yesterday, an auction block. Today, a graveyard.

Yours truly,

Fill in the blank.

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Photo of Mary Rogers-Grantham by: Mark Andrew James Terry

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