

“Black hair is”

We are getting up early on a Sunday morning
We are late night therapy sessions at the salon
We are big styles and loud voices
We are silent jokes and hushed laughter
We are strong-willed and enduring
We are afro-textured and alluring
Our hair is a polished diamond, dazzling and durable enough to cut through your tongue
whip-lash discrimination
We are more persistent than your prejudiced policies
We are not your standard of beauty

I am not ghetto
I am not unprofessional
I am not unruly
I am not a thing
I am not dirty
I am not greasy
I am not rebellious
I am not unmanageable
I am not difficult
I am not a threat
I am not an animal for you to pet

I am proud
I am not the norm

Black hair is thick kinks and curls
Black hair is bouncing coils and waves
Black hair is heavy hands and hot combs
Black hair is tender heads and quiet tears
Black hair is castor oil and cantu
Black hair doorags and silk wraps
Black hair is afro combs and afro picks
It's spending hours to get your edges slicks
Black hair is rice water for a conditioning repair
It's convincing your mom to stop perming your hair
Black hair is beautiful braids and weaves
Black hair is whatever we want it to be

Black hair is not your norm
But black hair is our normal
Our normal is natural

Our natural is beautiful
Black hair is beautiful
I am beautiful
We
are beautiful

“Said the Slave Ship to the Slave”

Your feet hit my deck and I find the next set of cargo to conversate with
Call me friend, freshly polished floors so be careful not to slip
Gaze at me like a mirror
Casted is possible the last time to see a reflection of home you recognize

Hi, they call me Guineaman
Or Slave Ship, Abductor, Wooden Evil, Black Death, Bring of Dark Punishment
Do not cast me in such a glum light
I was made for you
Just for you
I will be your faithful narrator in this journey
Don't blame me for the white man's application of my wood, I am simply doing my job
I keep us afloat
I am magnificent, an engineering elegance, be happy you get to marvel in all my glory
Taken aboard, immediately, you clothes hit the floor
Be grateful for our doctors
They are the best of the bottom of the barrel
So many more used to die before
Examined head to toe, your highs and lows
(make use, these surgeons aren't even truly for your benefit you know)
Then off on the beautiful atlantic sea we go

I hope you enjoy your stay, you will accompany me for months
And I know, our amenities aren't exactly 5 star
Dinner isn't filet mignon and caviar
But again
Be grateful
You poor creatures, you've probably never even see the ocean in all its' greatness before
Consider it your own private adventure
Despite the intense sea sickness and cramped feeling of living in a mason jar
It's actually quite bizarre (though I would say impressive)
Fitting broad black bodies into 4 feet wide and 5ft high space
It's hard being as efficient as I
But don't blame me
I was made to suffocate bodies until they conform and scar

But hey, they will eventually pass bills for your space to enlarge
Be happy to be on something that respects the law
Blame the chain that keeps you buried and shackled in your pod
You ever ask *them* why they kept hold of you so long
I am not the one who put you there
Get acquainted with this metal captive very well
For your people will endure many years of their embrace
From the fields to the jail cell
Trans-atlantic slave trade turned to school to prison pipeline
And never the fault of the ship it fell
But hey
I should be upset with *you*
The way you desecrate my sacred floors with
Sweat and tears from heat and pain
Excretions from lack of toilet facilities
Disgusting vomit from seasickness
An unsanitary jambalaya of bodies
Marinating so there's constant threat of disease
Personally, I feel bad for the creatures chored of rinsing you of feces

But hey, not all of you were crammed into a shoe box coffin
Women and children got more space in their own room
You all would then use this freedom to your advantage to start some rebellions soon
That's neither here nor there
And I know, this you easily accessible for assault from the crew
But take some responsibility for yourself - the way you beautiful black bodies make my mates swoon

We are good to you
While I keep everyone with smooth sail where we need to go
You are fed nutritious meals twice a day
We make sure, and I mean make sure you are fed
No skipping meals on our watch
No liberation with your expiration
You aren't allowed to die
Forced here, forced fed and cleansed we keep good care of you
Shouldn't you feel bad when you die from disease we caused you to receive
Or when you jump into the sea to repress the pain of the journey
You aren't allowed to die
Because then I am to punish one of my crew
Possibly tossed overboard, my boards trampled with one less pair of shoes
Hull battering a man I once knew
(Not that my captain was going to pay them anyway)
I'm just saying don't be upset

Because your black body be so valuable
Your pigment be the real definition of black gold
But don't mistake your polished price to be worth
You are still simply a good sale
But anyways
On sunny days you get to exercise
I know you miss the sun
Warm rays kiss your skin while your feet pound and bound to my deck
We keep you strong
Don't you enjoy being strong
We captured the best of the warriors
I mean you should be proud to have been chosen
Your strength granted you the ability to take over over 15% of me's
You had the ability, it's like you want to be servants
Your fault for being so docile, you are built sturdy
But will breaking bones you still let them break your spirit
You sailed the creole to free land
The amistad rebels were ruled free
You got your few wins don't be greedy
That's how you get hurt
Ask the other numb knuckled slaves of revolts failed
Master don't take too kindly to disobedience
You'll get your fingers in thumbscrews
A pain I know of all too well
Where is my sympathy as your broken digits drop blood on my hardwood
And your blood curdling screams scratch and peel my commendable new walls
I don't complain, why should you

Your journey here is coming to an end
You will be treated much better in you last days me
Fed well, cleansed, move more freely
So you are in tip top condition when you arrive at the land in which you are destined
It's in the best interest of the captains to protect their investments
You might even get to attend a small party
Nice clothes, good food, the deck you are free to roam
Enjoy the sway of my makeshift ballroom, otherwise would be rude
Not dancing hard enough might end very bad for you
This journey I have taken you on, $\frac{1}{2}$ of you will die
But I say be grateful to be of the 80% who survived
Because those who make it to America learn of the $\frac{2}{3}$ compromise
I say that's a pretty good ratio
Learn to be 60% human now
Because future generations yield 32% of you fractured humans will be gunned down
And I don't even exist anymore, it is not my fault

So who will you blame then
So who will give you your superior perspective of your collective aboard my craft
When I am released as your narrator
Though many literate you are not allowed to read or write
It takes the whites and a few of your liberated to be able to tell the story of your *fight*
So more poems like this one can be made
While my hallowed halls drown in the crash of the waves
I'll miss your pulsing warm bodies crowded on my floor
Comforting my amidships, me crying softly at my now peeling and cracked doors
And this story purged from textbooks out of of mind out of sight
Maybe it's true my view of history could use a rewrite

“A Black Boys Nursery Rhyme”

And the rhyme goes

Baa, baa, black sheep
Have you any wool?
Yes, sir, yes, sir
Three bags full
One for the master
And one for the dame
One for the little boy
Who lives down the lane

Baa, baa, black sheep
Now here as your slaves
You saved us savages?
Be happy you came?
100 for the master
100 for his son
You'll claim us as yours
For centuries to come

We are no longer sheep
Following your herd
Paved our own path to freedom
Have our own flight. Call us black bird
Black us now free for ourselves
Still for our freedom we fight

Cotton pricks now pen and ink pierce my skin as I write
Wait slavery was 100 and something years ago so we should just get over it right?

How about this?
Eeny meeny miny mo
Catch a nigger by his throat
When he hollers don't let him go
Now another nigga body under the floo

Now another fucking hashtag for someone to post
Now another momma's baby ain't coming ever home
Now another political statement to make on your shows

I mean fuck
I know you're tired of another black boy ranting about another black boys death
But hey we're tired of another black body being treated with such disrespect
Another check on cops bucket list
Another black woman raising her fist
I mean damn you saw us trying to do it the peaceful way
Protesting, posting, publicly speaking everyday
Least now y'all are gonna have to listen to what we have to say

So this
Is a revolution

But all you see if 1000 angry monkeys jumping on your bed
You don't look past the anger and see the cause, instead
Scared of the change to your lifestyle ahead
Grabs 1000 rubber bullets and shoots them all in the head

All I hope is that little black boy born after a fight so hard
With eyes twinkling so bright they melt our scars
No one ties you down for wanting to fly High
You'll sparkle like a diamond in the new night sky

“Quarantine State of Mind”

My house is ablaze
But so is the world
So is my brain
So I leave and you can find me
On the 1800th block of Valley street
Where isolation and deprivation find a meet
Walking through the flames
I am met with attacks of all kinds
Racism, Depression, Boredom, and Violence
And the scale I can't find
Find
Find family
Where is my family, inflamed, set ablaze
Stay, far away
6 feet of distance
How many times can you tell someone you miss them
Before it isn't true anymore? Keep away
Because that sickness
Is a hell on your family you don't want to raise
But I'm already sick inside my mind, travelling a maze
Will I feel like this the rest of my days?
Will the days never rest, forever set ablaze
Reach out, no
Stop, hot
Will burn
Keep
Your distance
Or you will pay
I'm sorry I ever thought you were mine to hold onto
Or that I didn't hold on enough when I was with you
When you were mine
Or maybe I was just yours
Your meringue to beat down and consume until you
Were filled with my lightness
I still remain burnt to a crisp,
Crackle, the heat
Flames inside of me burn me alive from the inside out
As I moan in painful defeat
But there I still stand on the 1800th block of Valley street
Watching a poor, pained black lady preach
About racist American, racism is America
She just wanted a conversation
But few of the important ones seem to care and

Understanding seems far like it's always busy elsewhere
But the fire in our souls fight hard to not be put out
And all either freezing or aflame
Hot, or cold refuse to be put under blackout
In lonely unity do I hear many bodies shriek
As I stand there contemplating this quarantine state of mind
On the 1800th block of Valley street