

# The Rhythm of My Blues

Would you know  
what and how it is  
to see yourself  
through someone else's eyes?

To be black and male,  
Afro and American?

To have been born  
in an existential dilemma?

To live in the constant crisis  
not of your own making  
you are born into it,  
it arises from being a part of  
"the black problem"?

The world  
in and outside of you  
this dichotomy of self.

To live behind  
the shrouded veil  
of black skin?

Would you know  
what it is to be  
black and woman, black  
Afro and American?

For one is more than this veil.  
Who am I?

Searching for the Self,  
in search of an authentic identity.

The pain  
coursing its way  
through these veins,  
the journey down memory lane.

Sifting through the ingredients  
of my singular  
and our collective awareness  
and experiences.

Can you hear the tortured soul  
in the griots tongue  
of the old negro spirituals,  
blues, jazz...  
in hip-hop?

A cry that begs – how long?  
An unjustified faith  
that somewhere  
someone,  
something,  
will right so many wrongs,  
that if we just-hold on-  
we will find justice.

Off to kill Jim Crow  
in World War II  
fighting to save a democracy  
we have never experienced.  
I see Hitler in Jim Crow eyes!  
The struggle continues.

Through acts of segregated bravery  
our courage shined through!  
Through the music  
our souls kept on moving,  
striving – for the message to be heard.

I say unjustified  
- this blind faith –  
because the songs  
have the tremendous eloquence  
of an agony  
of living a lie!

For no matter how much you deny it  
the truth of your eyes,  
it defies you.  
For you cannot justify  
the savage inequalities.

I want to depend on no one  
for the attainment of my bread.  
I ask not for hand-outs  
or hand-me-downs!  
Who knows better – must do better  
so I put up resistance;  
the rhythm of my agony,

that sings through my body electric.

The struggle to set free  
    my soul,  
this tongue is a knife,  
carving my voice  
upon the parchment of my life,  
in my image,  
according to my likeness!

The black rage  
I see in the eyes of my brothers  
who seize the trembling of their fists,  
lest it escape as empty blood-letting!

The fear,  
from moment-to-moment  
minute-by-minute  
day-after-day  
year-after-year,  
to grab this fear with both hands  
and choke it out of life.

The burden  
to be stripped of your dignity  
is to lose respect for yourself,  
is to silently accept  
    the bullshit,  
and to become  
    sub-human  
in your own eyes.  
This is why we continue singing this song  
with the rattling of bullets  
    black-on-black!

So, we sing  
and the tears sweep  
over our souls.

The keys and the notes  
open our hearts  
unshackling the poverty of our minds so that our souls  
may sour  
and know the glory  
    of God in us  
    as us,  
just as we are.

10/17/15