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POETRY

Three Poems
by Abdoulaye Djibo Harouna

Ever Been There?

To Nelson Mandela, Steve Biko, and many, many more who fought and died in the battlefields or who are dying day by day in the streets for noble causes. And to others whom I cannot mention by name who are still languishing in the sordid, inhuman jails under the world’s most repressive dictatorial regime.

I’ve never been there
In the land where the sky
And the earth are whites
But I can still feel the pain
I’ve never been there
Yet I can hear the clicking
Sound of a thousand manacles
The deafening barking of their dogs
Their loud gunshots; these are real
Not plastic; no better way to slay
A bloody negro: one good shot,
The matter is over!

No, my Lord, I’ve never been there
Nevertheless, I always hear
In my joyless nights
Police cars tearing away
Their roaring voices keep haunting me
You can’t eat here, sleep here,
Pass here, board here, sit here
WHITES ONLY!
Move along nigger.
I’ve never been there, my Lord,
But it was taught to me
As I will pass it on to my child.
The Legacy

I bring you not peace but a Sword.

Jesus Christ.

I will not be long my son
Promise me you will not cry.
Houses and stocks I have none
But you have life ahead of you
So I cannot but leave you my treasure:
Lumumba, Nkrumah, Cabral, and Sankara
Those who were all here before I was,
Those whose undying deeds nourished my soul.

I read despair and helplessness on your face
But cast these deceptive foes away from you
Turbid waters lead to the limpid source;
As boundless as the desert seems, it is not
For Fate and determinism jewelled it with oases
So follow the distant rainbow to our common bliss.
Though, to your infant eyes, this may not seem much
I leave you with nothing but the struggle
Or rather time, the struggle, and change
Since these are all you will ever need
To repossess what Nature and life gave you.

The Unwelcomed Messiah

Dedicated to the perseverance of those who stood up whenever and wherever human dignity is questioned—Selma, Little Rock, Soweto, West Bank, Santiago, Belfast.

I asked the dark and silent night
And she said, ask me not for I know not
So I ran to the pale and fading moon
And bewildered she said, no, not me!
Then I asked the still-glaring stars
And at one, in shame, they shied away
So I waited, waited for the graceful dawn
Then up, UP UP came the naked Sun
To embrace me with a web of rays
I knelt and raised my hands to the filled sky
Oh! thou knowledge-beaming Sun...I said.
Speak no further, cut in the one-hour-old Sun
For I do know what you seek and much more;
For restless nights you sought where it was not
Look and you shall find it on Malcolm's face,
Him, behind whose smile humanity hides.