

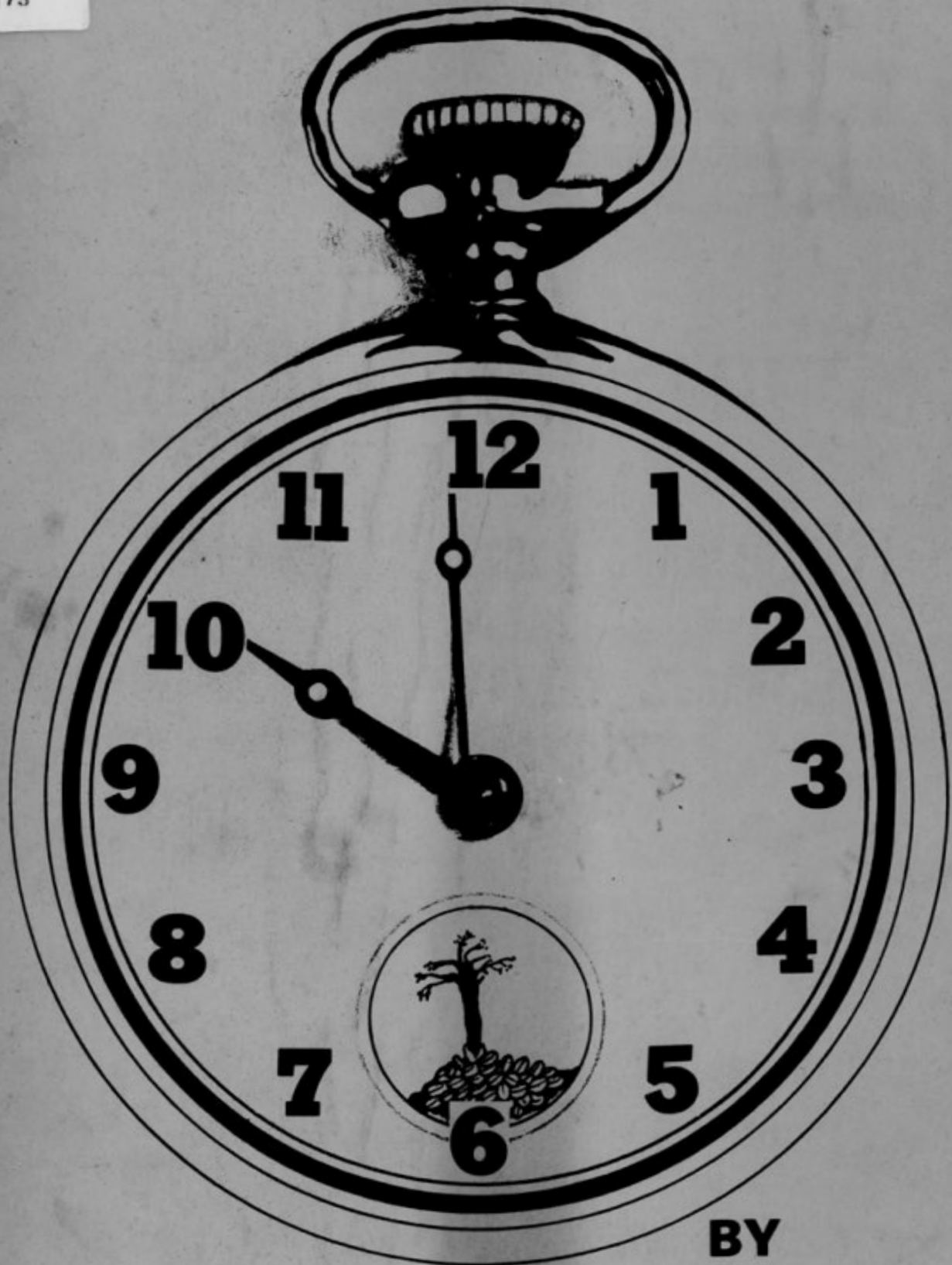
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THE SEEDS OF TIME

A COLLECTION OF POEMS



BY

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BLAMADON
Theatre
Workshop

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THE SEEDS OF TIME

A COLLECTION OF POEMS

BY

KONA KHASU

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Early strong winds

continually under life

Early East The Rolling Hills

Those round
rolling hills
that once hid my ancestors' hut
those strong
mighty trees
under whose limbs
my fathers
idled away their warm noondays
those hills
those trees
are gone away
that mountain
Nimba
dark
mysterious
heavy
clutched between her bosom
countless years of Afric's strength
those thundering rocks
passing
passing away

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their strong muscles
mercilessly cooked into
watery flesh
frozen
they are brutally
hammered into shapes
patterns
they are moded
and molded
more and more
Nimba's leafy shades
dangling high
shall be no more
no more will
she protect us
from the brilliant sun
no more
provide resting place
for birds
the lions find no rocks
to scratch their itching backs
the rocks are gone
gone into the shadowy future
the rocks like the sun
set in the west.

The Hunter

Silently
the trees rushed by
hushed in the early dews of morning
waving their heads and hands
to passers-by
the humming
of the engine
chirping
of the birds
screeching
of trees
falling
of branches
disturbed the deadness of the morning
a bird flew from nowhere
sat on a branch
and sang
a soft sad song
perhaps
crying in the dawn
the bushes parted
slowly
moving out of the way
making space

for a black limb
two eyes
white teeth
features alien
to the place
the figure stooped
threw back his head
his neck
made an acute angle with the ground
like a falling tree
ground covered with velvety grass
his hand stretched behind
like he was stretching his neck
pulled an arrow from a pouch
dangling from his back
he shot
and missed
and with that shot
he missed his chance
his only chance
to kill a bird

A Poem to Love

How the love pangs burns holes in the heart
to love and conceal one's love
better to hate, and hate bitterly
than to love and love sweetly
oh those wringing thuds that strike the heart
when the loved one returns not love
the jealous heart is like cancer
it burns
it eats the soul away
the tense moments of passion
drowned with indecision and unresolve
one extreme quickly transforms itself
hate gently disposes love
the lover is like a starved lion
enraged with food placed outside its reach
how cruel
how cruel
this pang of love
if one could cut the potion of the heart
that loves
liberate the body
from its torture

(to be continued)

April 7, 1965

Dear Patrice Lumumba

Like a cotton tree
withered before its bloom
a touch of flame
rudely hushed by the furious storm
your small but bright flame
O Lumumba
perhaps
you lie so low
so cold
smiling joyously for that flame
the flame you willed to us
perhaps
you giggle innocently
like you always did
with thousand thoughts
escorting each smile
each giggle
or
perhaps
you lie so crushed
fossilised by the cold earth
and your thoughts germinate
sprout
and shoot up in the lands of our Africa

O Lumumba
so selfless
so innocent
yet so guilty
you spent your life
in some unknown place
brutalised
mutilated
and like thousands of soldiers gone before
life was gastily plucked out of you
the light put out
where lies your grave now
decorated by the trees you loved so well
covered by the very sun that
ushered in that day
that fateful day that saw you fall
never to rise again

O Lumumba
hear your brother shout your name
you little light
threatened by this great sun
born of lowly parents
born to bring us light
to give us might

we hear the toms-toms of our drums

we feel the rhythms

of our marching soldiers

we smell the sweat

of our struggling brother

we see mothers exhorting

their brave sons to war

they fear no death

they can not die

they can not die

the struggle is one

the time is here

we can not wait

we can not wait

we can not wait

we must not wait

we must not wait

your flame draws us

onward to the fight.

Dangling Life

Thin as a cobweb

life dangles

unapproachable

incomprehensible

evasive

pervasive.

The Name

She sighed

what's your name

my

my

my game...

uh..er...

what did you say

my name

yes

what's your name

I have no name

I lost my name

when the music ceased to echo

Spring Thoughts

O lovely Spring
your youthful power
thrust upon these dead
and hollowed trees
breath into them your warm breath of life
dislodge
stir their frozen stream
haboured within them
by Winter's hotless heart
morning after morning
the sweet dew
drops itself
upon those dead trees
and slowly bring them back to life

(to be continued)

March 29, 1966

The Brook

The murmuring brook
lulls the tired stranger
to sweet repose
the cold wind caresses the stranger's face
then the night comes
the stranger lying on his back
watches the beautifully peaceful moon
always loyal
faithful and dedicated
to its cycle
one comes back to earth
awakened by the squeaking
of the insects
of night
enjoying the fearful pleasures
of listening to the scheming crickets
that wonder out of their hideouts
and remembering the staunch
vigorous smell of the markets
the smell of human bodies
toiling for the day's meal.

The Mushroom and the Poet

A withered mushroom stood
lonely in the desert sun
the old poet
cast his shinny eyes
wondering why the mushroom
had grown brown and black in places
from those distant places
pristine thoughts of timelessness
exumed themselves from the poet's mind
approaching from the rear
the old man dragged his sun-heated body
lazily as if the flesh and bones were separate
the old man quicken his pace
while the desert sand groaned
under his feet
he gazed
the immense distance
spread itself before him
frightfully
his visionary spirit
perceived a timeless
region of youth and age
he hung his head and was silent.

Muntu

The Niger flows its beaten course
embracing contents of the land
in its path a great work made
a mafestic deed done by on hand
endowed within your peaceful ripples
you keep the stories yet untold
below your depth
placed there by time
lie tales
of men great and bold
give up give up
your treasured secrets
you've guarded them like a loyal warden
the sons of Afric's ancient past
are tortured by their hidden past
bring back o Niger those glorious days
crowned with peace and serenity
return O Niger the ancient ways
free from strange cultures
their calamities
resurrect the past
resolve the doubt
why hesitate you like undecided virgins

ah yet
even yet
much of your vital spirit remain
and like a beacon light guides Afric's wandering sons
O partners of a day gone by
the sight of your unforgettable shore
depicts silent traces of the past
and tells of majesty yet undiscovered
a violent wind survives not the morning
and night always
disappears into day
speak
speak
Muntu
speak now
or silence your tongue forever.

The Scavenger

What I seek
I can not find
what I find
I do not know
What I know
I do not want
still
my restless soul
thrusts its being forward
from day to day
seeking
searching
disposing
not finding.

(March 6, 1966)

Unnamed Thing

My toe knocks the rock
I stop to talk
to it
I pour my drink
on the ground
my mother drinks with me!
slowly
the rock assumes a shape
see the eyes
mouth
ears
it says something to me
it speaks to me
listen to the rock
remembrances of our hurts
a thousand years old
ooz out of the rock
and it pains!

(October 28, 1965)

Our Man on Broad Street

He came down Broad Street
ninety degrees temperature
humidity eighty
he was sweating
sweating profusely
but
he wore a grey flannel suit
a three-piece flannel suit
vest
coat
and pants
all evidence of his civilisation
on his head sat a hat
you could see
he was hot
but he could not wear
his loose
cool shirt
made of thin-out cotton
he could not wear the dress
suitable for his oven-hot climate
no
not at this time
this place

he was going for an interview
he had to wear his civilisation
on his back
on his head
and on his arse
he was civilised
his dress showed it
at the intersection of Broad and Center Streets
he met a strangely garbed man
resplendent in his colourful robe
the stranger said
he was from Ashanti
the other fellow
our European-dressed friend
speaking in muffled words
like the talk of the dumb
accused the stranger of plotting
to turn Liberia into the Jungle City
"Your costume are too bright"
he grunted
"Your hair too thick
not brushed
your pants
which looks like
stringed together ropes
are like the Liberian zebra."

the stranger slowly turned
and in a polite
gentle smile
retorted in a brilliant Oxford accent:
"Pardon sir
could you show me where the library is
I'd like also to know where the museum is
you see

sir

I'm a visitor

I'd also like to spend the night
at the theatre."

and when our European-dressed friend
turned to leave

the stranger pled:

"one moment

sir

where is the city park?"

Our civilisation coated friend

stirred in confusion

in amazement

he had not heard of these things before

a brief moment of thought dragged itself out

he recollected himself and said:

"The library you'll find
at every street corner
it has signs
they say
DO NOT ORDER YOUR DRINKS UNTIL YOU ASK THE PRICE
oh yes
the bartenders are out to cheat
as for the park
each street is a part
you have to be careful for the traffic
bonds for motor accidents come quite cheaply
only a dollar and fifty cents
after much thought
you're in the theatre district already"
the poor stranger crinched his teeth
tightened his body muscles
fluids flowing instantaneously
fortified to receive the shock
"Over yonder is playing COWBOYS AND INDIANS
here
WHAT'S DOING PUSSYCAT?
the corner theatre has SPARTACUS' GREAT DEEDS."

"I see my friend"
the quiet stranger said
"I think I've just decided
I'll pass the night
in my room
reading Wole Soyinka
thanks anyway
Ol' boy."

Nov. 13, 1966

(Fiama, Monrovia)

THE OLD STREAM

Rays of sunlight streaming bright
blinding strokes
strikes the stream
the stream speak
it lives
it provides our needs
our ancestors are in it
the stream runs
it visits
the stream carries messages
from village to village
our ancestors send greetings
our fathers are not dead
they are searching
searching for life
the life after life
our fathers are not dead
they are for life
o stream of ancient power
your powers are not lost
our fathers' canoe
rode galliantly
on your watery surface

they went to war
to feasts
to fish
to collect the harvest
up and down stream
toward the sun
no longer do our canoes
rest upon your glassy body
no longer do our fathers
ride your calm surface
our canoes are
resting now
they were not demolished
your surface is resting
it is resting
they form a link
between our the past and present
between our fathers and us
a link
though strained
never breaks.

(July 31, 1965)

THE QUESTION

Shall we take a walk
a walk along the sandy
white beach
with its shells
and sea wonders
the rolling frolicking waves
bid us welcome
to a shore long made strange
the shore now merely a midget
dune of sand
once towered the lofty heights
as if to touch the sun
make itself into the sun
become the sun
shine like the sun
drive away the clouds
what sands are here
that would not let my leg go?
I shall let it pull me more
I shall yell for the strong waves
which will rush the dunes

(to be continued)

November 6, 1955

back into the sea
fished have need for sand
waves have need for sand
sand has need of the fishes and waves
they were born to live together
they are inseparable
no sand
no sea
the sea through the waves
washes the sand
keeps it white
the sand washes the sea
keeps it pure
they live in remarkable harmony
they live for each other
the sand is the beach
the sea is the other

(to be continued)

November 6, 1966

Pulsations of Time

The river looked at him
with a thousand eyes
he had learned from the river
that one must strive
strive downwards
to sink
seek
to seek the depths
there is no thing as time
the river is everywhere
at the same time
at the source
the mouth
the waterfall
the ferry
the current
in the mountains
the present only lives for it
no shadow of the past
no shadow of the future
come
help us rid ourselves of time

time brings difficulties
evils are the sons of time
time must be subdued
the river has very many voices
voices of the king
the warrior
the bull
night bird
the voice of a pregnant woman
a sighing man
voices of weeping children
a thousand other voices the voices of all creatures
blended in one small
still
voice
the voice of Being
perpetual Becoming
as water goes to water
and youth to youth
as water is stronger than rock
gentleness stronger than severity
so is love stronger than force
ask the river about
listen to it laugh about it
then live like the river.

(December 1, 1966)

The Holy Men

You cave-like men
men of empty heads
rotten bones
see how the beads of sweat
run down your decaying bones
you void
you bones
whose surface flesh flees
the flesh which dangles
on your bones
tomorrow is today
so you died yesterday
before our birth
we died
we were born to die
we died the day we were born
yet
we live even in our death
we are all dead men
we are living dead
waiting for our time
puffing steadily

while time stands still
or perhaps
has passed us by
blowing away our dust
our kingdom is indistinguishable
we do not know ourselves
are we dead
really dead
are we alive
very alive
but rest you
the time for question is past
these are days of hollowness
of hateful silences
stony faces
dried
clutted noses
with read patches of blood
splattered here and there
these times allow no questions
men must act thoughtlessly
thought
we banish you

(December 15, 1966)

we live with the dead
we live among the dead
we are dying
we are dead
they abyss between life and death
is unknown
we die noiselessly
slowly
with a swisper

(December 15, 1966)

little trees
gray trees
big trees
not all trees
trees of potent medicines
trees which gave birth to swift snakes
I can still remember
wood men searched helpily
carelessly
to cut the trees
the trees that made our drums
drums to dance by
drums to fight by
drums to cry to
to sing to
all lovely

Decadence

The dried
burned out trees
distributed about
misplaced
out of season
forgotten but here
longing to be remembered
little trees
grey trees
big trees
but all trees
trees of potent medicines
trees which gave birth to swift canoes
I can still remember
when men marched happily
ceremoniously
to cut the trees
the trees that made our drums
drums to dance by
drums to fight by
drums to cry to
to sing to
all lovely

talking drums
how I loved to hear the drums
they made us music
brought us the news
they made us dance
they made us sad
our village echoed
and re-echoed
with rhythms from our lovely drums.

the way you represent
express sacrifice
learned scholars tell of your glory
written in blood
inscribed on thousands of bottles
used as slabs
as paper
records of glory
those who had gave up their bottles
were they regular men
black men
white men
clergies men
the warriors and monks
know as differentiated

Verdun

O Verdun

Verdun of fame

Verdun

the symbol of heroism

could ever a small patch of land

command such fame

such awe?

for many you represent

supreme sacrifice

learned scholars tell of your glory

written in blood

inscribed on thousands of bodies

used as slate

as paper

records of glory

those men who gave up their bodies

were they regular men

black men

white men

clourless men

the bullets and bombs

knew no difference!

they tell me
you haboured those brave men
those proper men
who spilled their blood
gave up their souls
they tell me
you fed them
clothed them
all thousands of them
Germans, Grench, Americans
and oh yes Africans
all were merely men
but when I say you
Verdun
when I saw you with
my own eyes
the abandoned canons
corroded bullet
large pits hallowed by
bits of powerful steel
I stopped to see you
in a new light
today you stand immaculate
worshipped- sacred
decked on all sides by monuments
"Dedicated to the Unknown Soldiers"

(To be continued)

Dead Days at the Waterside

The river roars as it flows
restlessly to destinations unknown
the river pierces the limitless expanse
and like the heavenly ball
it rolls along endlessly
above its angry ripples softly
the pristine wind whispers
fills the presence with sweet peaceful fragrance
the sonorous sound of its flow
beats ceaselessly on the banks
its force gathers dead leaves and mud
on the bank
a lonely stone
rests boldly in defiance of solitude
forgotten
and forsaken by time
almost forsaken by space
it seems suspended in
a void of mud and water
of forgetfulness
this ceaseless flow of the river
brings lost memories of forgotten times
when children innocently bathed
naked bodies in those clear, cold waters

when canoes slipped effortlessly by
on their continuous search for food and revelry
when mothers washed their suckling babes
villagers fetched the vitalising elements
of this overflowing river
and washerwomen purged their clothings of their muddied states
now the river is no river
it has disappeared
a black abyss of dirty space
supplants the beautiful and strong river
snares which trap the weary
unprotected
unsuspecting beasts
wandering lazily
snares of beasts and men
this river
once the bounty giver
now dead and empty
lies dreadfully
its monumental mouth
ready to receive
a thin line of cold water
drips steadily from a high
steep rock
the river we once knew
the river we once feared
the river we once worshipped
is no more

A Winter Night

it was a winter night
one of those january nights
when winter resumes its whizzling ways
and scatters its last snow and storms
with desperate fury
no spring
no sun
no happiness
the cold snow spreads itself about
like the boundless sky
it rests its death-cold self
and then
the wind
strong, fearful, and bold
races itself to nowhere
the snow spreads its icy blanket on man
and varnishes him in dusty earth
then
the spring
the trees
the flowers
slowly raise their drowsy limbs
birds resume their chaos
ants and squirrels resume
their endless search for nut
and the grass receives the bottoms of many men.

Invocation--Black Mother

O Africa

you like a mother of many children
abused, insulted, brutalised, and abandoned
you bore your beautiful black children
and they were dispersed
like leaves in the dry season
flying, sinking, dropping
falling in mid-air
some sliding smoothly
in the cold breeze
others rushing
in the hash storm that blows
them to distant places
do you often wonder
how your children
could leave you naked
hungry and unprotected
leave you to stand unguarded
defenseless
to be bought for bags of rice
of millet
to be seduced and abandoned
BLACK MOTHER
BLACK MOTHER, MOTHER, BLACK, BLACK MOTHER!

we have not deserted you
we learn the deceivers' ways
their tricks
we learn, we prepare
to rescue you
protect you
and feed you
your sons and daughters
are spilled around the world
working for the day
that great day
when a great army
shall converge upon you
the army of your sons and daughters
an army of doctors, engineers
Warriors, Warriors, Warrrrrrriors, Warriors
Warriors, Warriors
Warriors
farmers, clerks, your scribes
and more Warriors
they join and shout
burn down the fortresses of the robbers
put them in the dungeons they built
to carry away our mothers and sisters
our brothers
strike the bastard
with their own weapons

BLACK MOTHER

we shall do this in their own tongue
with their own weapons
their own logic
their own logic
and we shall LIBERATE YOU
FOREVER, FOREVER
we shall strike the bastards
the apes
the sons of the cavemen
and kiss our dear BLACK MOTHER
the day is coming
coming fast BLACK MOTHER
I know you say
you have heard this before
yes
but each son of yours who says
strike the bastards
says it with renewed vigour and meaning
with more anger
they mean it
BLACK MOTHER, MOTHER, BLACK, BLACK MOTHER
too long have they
left you standing naked in the rain
to long in the sun
the bastards took your spice
they stole your gold
your diamond
they raped your daughters, our sisters

enslaved your sons
your beautiful black sons
now they go to work
on your iron body
each day
transported across the sea
your ebony, mahogany
your strong limbs
splintered and shipped for decorations
of the bastard's homes
your sweet lovely fruit
plucked, sucked
to nourish your captors
and their sons
and their son's sons
bit it shall not be long again
BLACK MOTHER, MOTHER, MOTHER, BLACK, BLACK MOTHER
your strong powerful
sons will march on your captors
strike, strike
the bastard who desecrate our BLACK MOTHER
strike, strike, strike, strike
strrrrrrrriiiiiiiiiikkkkkkkkke
strike.

Things I Know

It's bad to have many persons
too many persons
too happy too long
there must be something
that rubs them the wrong way
thousands of rubs
another thousands of itches and bites
it's untrue to have them smile
say I'm fine because you know
they are not
I've known many persons
too many persons who say
"I'm fine. I am all right."
then go home to lie awake on empty bellies
listening to their children
scream and cry for food
I've known persons
too many persons
who spend their days in want
their nights in tears
longing for relief to come
hoping the new day will come
wishing that it not come

yes

I have known many mothers

too many mothers

who sent their young boys

to slave for cruel men

men who kicked them

men who stepped on them

for crumbs of bread

for grains of rice

but one day

one of these long days

these mothers will not have to

those cruel men who ride those big, long cars

will disappear from their high pedestals

their big, long cars will disappear with them

their false pride

their false sense of being

will disappear with them

the people will claim

that which is rightfully theirs

the people will be free to enjoy

life, to live their lives simply

their daughters will not have to suffer

the indignities of being abused by these sinister creatures

creatures who call themselves 'civilised men'

riding big, long, black cars

the days of the big, long, black cars will be over

over forever

Speedily we grow old
resolutions upon resolutions
resolutions made
resolutions of resolutions made
deeds done to undo
time presses us all on
takes our hands and wringles them
takes hold of our feet
makes them immobile
takes away our motion, our push
time, our constant, everpresent enemy
take hold of our faces
renders them invisible, unrecognisable
gradually, no quickly
we are washed away into the grey, bleak shades
the unforgotten
all our resolutions
come to memories
resolute thoughts and actions of impotency
rested in the minds of men
never, never made to speak and walk.

(March 18, 1969)

Their words---Deception

They say we must wait
wait, son, wait on your turn
education is the only key to success
so study hard
study hard, son, study hard
study damned hard to fill the places of your leaders
they tell us to work hard
plant farms, son, plant farms
they tell us many things
they tell us
what they tell us is too much
they say we are free
the freest country in the world
they tell us we are democratic
the most democratic nation in the world
they say they had an election here
told us that tubman was returned
they tell us we are rich for this
rich son, you are rich
they say all will be well and prosperous
for another four years
tubman will spend 1,000,000 a year
on his health
and that will make us the healthiest nation on earth

they tell us we are progressing
the returned president will continue the progress
we are strong, they say
the strongest country in the world
they tell us the world looks at us
the most looked at country in the world
they tell us the world respects us
the most respected nation on earth
they tell us many things
they tell us we are great
the greatest nation on earth
don't you feel your greatness?
we are cultured
the most cultured nation in the world
they make us laugh
we laugh a lot
they make us sad
the sadest people who are also the happiest people
in the world they tell us jokes
they say we must laugh
sometimes we do not want to laugh
some people laugh
not loud, though
some people cry
everybody does something
because there is nothing else to do

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so we listen to jokes
we demand more rice
but all we get is joke, jokes
only jokes are given us
so we demand more jokes
only jokes can sooth our hurt
only jokes can ease our pain
because it is only joke that we can get
we know only jokes
jokes we have heard all our lives
jokes we have had all our lives
then someone tells us the truth
we laugh at him
because they say we must laugh at him
now we are a laughing nation
laughing and being laughed at
because we have lived with many things
we heard so much
we have seen so much
we have known so much
too much not to laugh
really too much not to laugh
But one day Liberia
will have to stop laughing
Liberia will have to take account of its century-plus age
It will not be funny then, no jokes
the results will be startlingly frightening.