

## radical imagiNation

“Conventional wisdom would have one believe that it is insane to resist this, the mightiest of empires, but what history really shows us is that today’s empire is tomorrow’s ashes; that nothing lasts forever.” — Mumia Abu Jamal

In this, our new country, I gather my children  
Say,

How lucky you are, to grow up  
out of ashes

We have buried all the emperors for you  
to play with your cousins on the grass  
their bodies give.

The only thing they had to offer  
the earth, in the end

For you to run free  
thru prairies, hills

forests and fields  
that belong to none of us

because in this country, we sidestepped the grave  
error of etching our names onto everything

with it’s own language, instead, we let the land  
break our tongues over it’s own pronunciation

this time, the land tells us how we can be of use  
and we train our ears to receive

and that was just the first decree, in this, our new country,  
where it is not a crime to come from somewhere else

and citizenship is granted upon re-enactment  
of one’s most beloved proverb,

since every "other" is part of one, another  
blended harmony standing out in a national anthem  
and you can be a bended knee or raised fist or palm over heart

since, in this country, we mind our business,  
don't tell no body how to move against the swell of song

In the old empire,

They labeled us poison while leading  
the life out of water  
isolated us like illness in the body  
they drew us into, a body they invaded first  
and claimed to have  
came to consciousness inside.

They constellated the land with confinements,  
cut fences and clamped circles round whole demographics,

from the knowingest grandmother  
to the freshest son, who never got the chance to be alive

and young enough not to be hated by his country

They shut us into camps, concentrated their eyes on our entire  
lives, registered our birthdays, they took fishermen for spies

then handed them back to our families broken  
into scales. they swiped our language and left  
only the bare skeletons of folktales

They closed us into prisons while plantations stayed open  
for white people to throw weddings on

they closed in at the protests and beat us open  
as if to batter their obsession, bloodtaste for blackness  
out on all the bodies their batons could touch

and I know,  
I *know*

it may be irresponsible to use the word “We”  
presumptuous pronoun “Us,” in a poem,

but *This* is a country. (!)

and we made “Us,” a possibility,  
an even plane. a wilderness of differences  
with the same height, the same healthcare,  
the same rights, the same blood,  
the same children

And I am an “Us,”

a mixture of countries and blood  
that met as comrades and created the same children

My ancestors come to my candle, whisper,

“We suffered different beneath the same rule  
but our resistances rubbed shoulders  
and the shared muscle is you—”

They told me that so I could tell you,

*my children,*

We have burned it all down for you !

There are NO PRISONS, ONLY GARDENS,  
NO WARDENS, ONLY WOMEN  
with an eye on your progress  
as you make it home late at night,  
there are NO COPS. JUST YOUR GIRLS  
running up to form a chain,  
just witches twitching to twist up a perp's name  
with their tongues, there are no reservations,  
only free feast programs running from coast to coast,  
no cages, only open bars for boarders  
to mingle with hosts, we have every reason  
to toast the grand old guardsmen of convention,  
because they were SO WRONG

we, the natives, survived the end they promised would never come  
and we marched on. at some point with our backs turned

the past

entombed itself in glass

re-named itself history

We thought their war on Us  
would always last  
but here you are

Blessed progeny of protest  
Anointed with ash  
Uprising every dawn

