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# Stories In Black

**Keisha-Gaye Anderson**

**Abstract**

Three poems about anti-Blackness and state violence.

## Black Story

Black is the only story  
keeping this machine of malice and denial  
ambling in circles  
while the vultures rest  
in peripheral places  
off the grid  
piping a straw  
into your brain

Black bullets  
Black blood on concrete  
Black baby hungry  
Black body die of  
Black people diseases  
Black girl please shake that ass dance is all the rage  
Black is beautiful today, but next year, we'll see  
Black boys don't cry  
Black poverty  
Black vetted through school is safe cool  
Black fits the description, fetches hefty bounty, whether in suit or  
sneakers  
Black believers rebrand Jesus, still steppin' in the name of love  
Black brothers wear blinders looking for love that's been beside them all  
along  
Black bruises shaped like smiles, still grinning for the camera, and water-  
proof shelter  
Black economic plan is another scam. After all that money, where the  
school at?  
Black mothers' tears on repeat  
Black retreat before even tryin' to walk through a shrapnel whirlwind of  
high stakes and false needs  
Black be so black be so black be so black that they don't see we

But I have always seen  
Myself

And these are your bogeymen anyway  
not my truth

I am  
that I am  
as uncomplicated and ancient  
as a tree  
a stream  
a need to laugh  
and kiss a lover  
and more than all that  
a permutation of creation  
who has no interest in helping you feel safe  
or entertained  
our pain is not  
nourishment  
or a bonfire  
it has only been  
one more way  
for you to not look at yourself  
to insist there is an other

"All men are brothers,"  
Baldwin said,  
even knowing then  
he would be  
misunderstood

We good.

We write ourselves  
and know it will all come crashing down  
when you decide turn the lens on  
you  
and see a stranger  
see loneliness  
see pain

Go tell your own story  
if it pleases you

Just leave me out of it

## A Bullet is a Boomerang

Every day  
a lava flow of words  
a litany of black death  
makes ash  
of the sapling hope  
you tended with  
verses of dead poets

The words on screens  
on paper  
out of the mouths  
of human-like drones  
tell which flesh  
what bullets went  
where  
and the confetti  
of names  
creates zero visibility  
treacherous conditions  
for living in any direction

A toxin  
that numbs the brain  
to the death spiral  
that sucks us down  
while somebody  
parties,  
apparently,  
cause these bullets get no rest

Burrow into 7 year-old  
with barrettes  
blast through chest  
of teen with sweet tooth  
separate the neck of man genuflecting to who he was taught  
looked like god  
but what kind of life giver  
protector and server  
racks up bodies  
like poker chips?  
What game is this?

There is just no  
brown skin  
that those bullets can't find  
no shortage of canned  
explanations  
rationalizations  
lies  
put into print  
for you to chew on  
lay over your sleep  
like a burlap blanket  
in a blizzard

But we can't die  
you understand?

A bullet is a boomerang  
bringing in the armada  
of Great Old Ones  
birthing themselves back  
into babies  
born with gray hair  
and the more bullets they make  
the more ancient the ancestors  
who step through that door

And if I were the blind bullet makers  
I would study why I think  
killing would keep me breathing  
and I'd be very careful  
who those bullets  
wake up

## Endless Sleep

Not because  
we are bulletproof  
do we want to be shot at  
'Hard Life'  
as a birthright  
is a trap

Who put those  
crabs in a barrel  
anyway  
when they come from  
endless the sea?

What does it really mean  
to be free?

Hunger keeps us running  
because there is something  
that devours the  
best of what we are  
and our reflection  
becomes a comet's tail  
a fading rainbow  
a coil of smoke  
that evaporates  
when we wake  
to walk in circles  
for someone else's  
pleasure  
or amusement

They stay  
happily inert  
with no map  
nor desire  
to be better  
and maybe  
that's their limit  
critters pulling us down  
by our feet  
Why can't we wake  
from this sleep?

### **About the Author**

Keisha-Gaye Anderson is a Jamaican-born poet, author, and visual artist based in Brooklyn whose books include *A Spell for Living*, *Everything Is Necessary*, and *Gathering the Waters*. Her poetry, fiction, and essays have been widely published in national literary journals, magazines, and anthologies. She is a past participant of the VONA Voices and Callaloo writing workshops, and was short-listed for the Small Axe Literary Award. Her visual art has been featured in numerous exhibitions and literary journals. In 2018, Keisha was selected as a Brooklyn Public Library Artist-in-Residence. Most recently, she was presented with the Poetic Icon Award by her alma mater, Syracuse University. Keisha holds an MFA in fiction from The City College, CUNY. Website: [www.keishagaye.ink](http://www.keishagaye.ink). Email: [keishagaye1@gmail.com](mailto:keishagaye1@gmail.com)