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A Note to My Sisters of the Diaspora¹

Fassil Demissie

I thought of writing
A note, a letter, a book
400 years ago
Before the swirling diaspora

Since you left
That day
Snatched from our land
 our people
 raped
Uprooted and humiliated
By Europe, to be made slaves
In the fields and factories
In the mines and as domestics
Scattered over continents
 in the United States
 in the Caribbean
 in South America

And now
After 400 years of exploitation
 colonialism
 slavemasters and factory bosses
 sweat
 tears
 Jim Crow laws
 Lynching and murdering
Reduced to poverty and destitution
For the profit of others
To fuel their system of accumulation
With your blood
Your childrens labour

You have survived

Who can understand your plight
 Your pain and suffering in
 Sharpeville
 Soweto
 Jim Crow Country

Have others felt the texture of your oppression?
 The scourge of the colonizer
 The juggernaut of apartheid
 The interrogation of the secret police
 torture
 detention
 disappearance
 “accidental” death

Have your friends from Europe tasted these?
 No, No, my sisters of the diaspora
 my beloved
 long separated sisters
 on three continents

We have each faced
 ostrogoths
 visigoths
 conquistadores
 settlers
 pilgrims
 boers/afrikaners
 gangsters
 plunderers
 cowboys
 and Rambos

They still stalk this world
 Making it unsafe for everybody
 Inch by inch
 Day by day
 They devour everything in their way
 and the people
 the land and the resources
 and now the heavens

As I write this note to you
In the shadow of the bomb
 the bomb
 the bomb
 the ultimate negation of life
I am reassured by the resilience of your life force
 your strength and courage
 the capacity of your determination
In the struggle

My sisters of the diaspora
Let us come together and sit
 in our family compound
 to sort things out
 to share a moment
 to map out the road to freedom

When Africa and the world is truly free
From the grips of the West and the East
From the illusion of their promised lands
From the nightmare of their ideologies
And their sphere of influence
There will be time for me
Time for you
Time for us
All of us
To celebrate
To rejoice
The universe of our humanity

Your Brother
From the Continent

Note

¹ Demissie, Fassil. "A Note to My Sisters of the Diaspora." *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies* 14(3) (1985). Retrieved from: <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/92t842kb>

