

Arzell Gulley

They don't want us to recite our poems

They don't want us to recite our poems
don't want the people to behold any signs
nor see any symbols and
they damn sure don't want it known that
the ancestors are with us.
They don't want us to recite our poems.
They fear the foreign sounds of our secret language:
 Hope.
They thought it long dead.
They are afraid of the spread of our particular fever
Low it creeps along the sense—
our hearing and seeing, an awakening perception
our ability to sniff out what's false
the willingness to feel our most painful wound
 the taste of blood on our lips.
They don't want us to recite our poems.
They are afraid of the promise of our spring
the way mother earth blesses green for us,
hiding her gifts in full view of both the strong and
 weak alike.
She has shown us first stones in a babbling brook
love, faith, courage, tenacity, and understanding.
They fear the inevitable fall of their rampaging giants.
They don't want us to recite our poems.
They want us to die with our songs unsung.
They want to bury our burned out husks.
 Perfectly preserved shells
with sightless eyes of bitter black smoke and
a mouthful of lightly clenched pearl-white teeth
 trapping inside, for all eternity,
 the music that they desperately fear.
They don't want us to recite our poems.