

The Cage

To them,
my hair had grown out
off the top of my head
and used its tight coils
to build a cage around me.

Making an exotic animal
kept in a cage
thousands of miles away from its home.

They reach into the depths of my cage
to touch my coils
for a feel of my exoticness.

I had never built my cage
only living in it.
Unable to muster the courage
to move the image away from their minds
I'd let them examine me as a specimen.

I was exotic,
because every time I looked outside of my cage
I saw carbon copies
pale people looking at me, mouth agape
as I let them claw through my fur
tarnishing myself with it

Hell at the Bottom of a Pot

The melting pot is sitting on a heated stove with all kinds of fruits and vegetables we stir and stir, hoping we can all come together to a perfect, equal blend where no one rises to the top with the bubbling waters of the soup granting themselves the freedom and authority to sit on an individual's neck, for nearly ten minutes—his voice, weary and tired saying, “I can’t breathe.” Or is that degrading, *individual*? I should say his name, “George Floyd.” To give him back the humanity that was unjustly taken away from him. A humanity that is often brought down to blacks, negros, colored anything to make us feel like we have no place here. Packing all our bags to fly back home to their vision of a poor, economically flawed, and unsafe land, but *our* Africa.

Am I not a part of this melting pot? My heart beating a thousand pouring rains in the same rhythm as my mother and father when a police car drives by. People want—We need justice, freedom, and equality. The thoughts scare me but there's no going back. My nightmares now filled with the same hellscape reality that I could be next, Called the n-word at a store or shot while sleeping in the comfort of my own home. I push them away wanting to go back, to my rainbows and sunshine Before they were tainted by the realities of police brutality, gun violence, and prejudice

Yet there is nowhere for me to hide in this scolding pot. It’s painted on my face, like a bad tattoo, a marking that no amount of salt and vinegar can rub off or lighten So why hide when I could take a stand? Why let their tainted ideologies sink me to the bottom of their pot where I am destined to burn?