

## COLORFUL FORMS: SIDE A

### White Noise

Traded The Hill for the 'Burgh, I had to dip,  
 Beltway jammed, full of counterfeit politics.  
 Deafened by an orange predicament, in those marble buildings.

Signed the new lease, wrote about things new and different,  
 Saw communities engaged,  
 Met scholars who gave a shit  
 Felt like the first bite of water ice on an August day.

The segue came so swift;  
 They flipped the switch quick,  
 The machine clicked,  
 Started whirring,  
 Producing familiar hums of doldrums.

I thought I had escaped *it*.

**White Noise** rolls like the tide, flowing,  
**Its** waves invading,  
 Mutating,  
 Composing,  
 A cunning tsunami  
 Masterfully annihilating  
 Every sound competing.

Wish I was surprised when the **White Noise** started stifling,  
~~Muffled my attempts to highlight artists who envisioned justice,~~  
~~Hushed my words about a leader proud of her Blackness,~~  
~~Muzzled my intentions to promote local Black History Month events—~~

This was just the overture—to a grand orchestration, ~~even more trifling.~~

**White Noise** glutting on silence,  
 Modulating the archiving,  
 Bass strumming, ~~muddying the storytelling,~~  
 Sonic attacks so disorienting,  
~~Distorting the truth,~~ twisting,  
 Turning sequences of news, spinning,

This consonance of fear and cowardice

Makes sonatas of ~~over-correction and appeasement,~~  
 Toned with strophic indifference  
 To global institutional racial violence.

Warned not to write a lick, ~~if a whiff of the stench of “DEI” was in it—~~

Reactionary *orders* dropped straight from the top of a fresh, nebulous  
 Department of Corrections, with wardens benefitting  
 The most ~~from the results of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion.~~

I should’ve expected this.

Just couldn’t stand the ~~false relation.~~  
 Official performative gatherings zooming through appeals for substance,  
 Prematurely bowing for merely having difficult conversations,  
 Reprised tacet resolutions of ~~direct action after internal investigations,~~

Offering one solution:  
*“Volunteer if you don’t like this new direction.”*

Followed up with repetitive meetings of ~~puckered lip service,~~  
 Producing atonal tunes of ~~indecision.~~

Meanwhile, *this suite* of ~~inaction~~ pollutes the climate,  
 Pestilential, like it is ~~sinister virus,~~  
 Loud as hell while saying nothing.  
 I hear *it* echoing when I’m typing  
 To a beat ~~stringing my fingers up—~~ a puppet.

I didn’t sign up for *this*.

Feeling fed up, thinking  
 About the decade-plus I spent specializing  
 In chronicling ~~the same topics~~  
*White Noise* is suddenly suppressing.

Wasn’t that experience the reason they even hired me?

*White Noise* thriving on ~~discouraging,~~  
 Pausing developments of ~~civil rights progressing,~~  
 Jackhammering with clanging, ~~hypocritical discriminating,~~  
 Demolishing ~~demands for accountability, evading,~~  
 Oversaturating structures with ignorant, ~~babbling intolerance, damping,~~  
 Building enormous stumbling block chords ~~gentrifying,~~  
 Wringing out modern abolitionist movements, ~~desiccating,~~

The fermenta of ~~biases~~  
 Temper brewing melodies of ~~domestically terrorizing~~

Hymns to favorable, oppressive policies,  
Festering with the wreckage of perpetual marginality.

I'm scared to even *write this*:  
Sometimes, *it* makes me want to *quit*,  
Plug my ears and *stop fighting*,  
*Relinquish my wishes for social justice, abandoning*  
*My endeavoring for meaningful changes.*

*White Noise* is a rest—ing my attempts to make them.

So I *just stick to the script*.  
*Or risk-navigating a chaotic job market—*  
*Got bills to pay,*  
*Physician visits,*  
*Prescriptions.*

But I'm still annoyed by the dissonance.

*The arpeggio compels me,*  
Now I'm complicit.  
Used to feel liberated—  
Now the *Noise* ties me up, a hostage.

*White Noise* restraining my voice,  
*Reigning* it into a chorus forced  
To be soundless—  
*Replacing it with instruments*  
*Reverberating anthems harmonizing*  
*Longing for sustaining*  
*Supremacy.*

## Beat me blues

Wrapped my hands real tight,  
 Strapped on my gloves,  
 Practiced combos one through five  
 At a gym in Homewood.

Started thinkin' 'bout a time  
 Before throwin' these 'bows  
 When I was a little boy  
 Growin' blue shadows.

Loved Coach when I was little.  
 Coach loved my momma true.  
 Till one day he made her leave.  
 And she took me with her too.

Didn't wanna stay there—  
*Was too young to know,*  
 Why we couldn't live with Coach.  
 Then he drove up to her door.

Cried on the phone,  
 Told Coach I didn't want to stay.  
 He told me to walk outside,  
 And he drove me away.

*Was too young to know*  
 What Mommy went through  
 After you took me from her, Coach,  
 And I went back with you.

What happened that day,  
 Well, that was just the start  
 Of the tear that separated  
 And ripped the family apart.

Brothers stayed with Mommy,  
 I played on your team,  
 Y'all'd swap us on holidays,  
 Brothers and I gamed in between,

*We were too young to know,*  
 Playtime was too abrupt,  
 Took 'till we were grown men  
 To start stitching that tear back up.

Treated real me nice  
 Long as I did what you said,  
 But the older I got,  
 The more tears I shed.

*Was too young to know*  
 Every reason you'd attack,  
 But it stung every time  
 I felt that black belt on my back.

We fussed, we fought—  
 You called me out my name.  
 Hurt me the most  
 With them mind games.

*Was too young to know*  
 How them words you said  
 Planted seeds inside me,  
 Grew blue shadows in my head

Getting bigger now  
 Taller, stronger too—  
 But you'd still remind me:  
 That you could *beat me black and blue*.

*Was too young to know*  
 You meant what you said,  
 Til that cross pounded my eye,  
 And a blue shadow spread.

Moved away from home,  
 No plans to move back,  
 I see your beating blue heart,  
 Breaking as the distance spreads red cracks.

I'm old enough, now,  
 And things started to improve  
 When you said you regretted  
 The times you beat me red and blue.

*Realizin' I'll never know*  
 'Bout every blue shadow you grew.  
 Said your folks used to send you outside—  
 Said, "Pick a stick, so we can make a switch and *beat you*."

You were my first coach,  
 Though real tough on me.  
 When you said you were sorry for the bad times

You stopped being “Coach,” turned into “Daddy.”

I’m all warmed up now,  
Red, squaring up with the truth.  
I can’t drop my guard down,  
And let them blue shadows beat me too.