

Mater Dolorosa

Chief Tuscaloosa is dead. His name is
On all our lips now. I guess We've made him
An icon. Still we forget His name means
"Black Warrior"— but who here Will praise him?

Black Warriors are commemorated But seldom are they celebrated
For if they were, we'd have to face the Brutal reality of hatred

So...

How do we begin These rituals?
How should we begin These ceremonies?
Let our words be built On principles
Let us not descend To depths we know lead
Right back to pretense And victimhood

So...

Dearly beloved We're gathered humbly
On this occasion Commemorating
One hundred fifty Years of Old Dixie's
Fine institution In Tuscaloosa
Not just the college No, we acknowledge
That fifty years back We let the first blacks
Put on the coif too To show the law school
Knew times were changing That's why we came here

Tonight

Because our absence Mattered the most
It mattered so much They made their goal
To make us absent Because they could
Simply absent us From this fine school

Their words come back to haunt us:
"Find somewhere else to flourish...
Go shine somewhere you're wanted...
Someplace that's full of promise Unlike you"

So...

Is this a wake or Should we be mourning The happy ending Tale of a place where Could graduate and	A celebration? Or just enjoying We wrote to tell this Black men were safe and Take strides t'ward greatness?
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The past should be Not living in What good is it Our history As if we're free Ancestors we And fear and greed Supremacy...	For learning from I get that but If we run from And talk and talk And different than Learned hatred from and daydreams of
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Those good ol' days On cathode Ray We feared was gray We were afraid Miscegenate Must separate To educate And thus our fate	Let's talk about The ones we watched Tubes back when all (both dark and light) The colors might So black and white Make it a crime The negro mind	Was sealed
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Even as far as we have come The grief in our memorials We are always, always remiss We're always choosing someone first	Despite all of the penance, all Even in our remembrances The fact of human nature is Then overlooking others, yes
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Erasing someone	Rejecting someone
Replacing someone	Forgetting someone

That's why we all can smile
Even with open eyes
Won't have to hear them cry
They had to live and die

And keep on celebrating
We'll never see those faces
Won't have to see the way that
We'll never know their names, no

Now we can all say that
Simply dissipated
As each generation
The hurt and the hatred
Building block foundation
This more perfect place, yes...

Our heartache, our pain has
It's gone, it has faded
Builds new hopes in place of
That once was the favorite
For ev'rything made in

Is righteous not racist
We've read in newspapers
So miseducated
To know there were days when
People hung from strange limbs
By anyone, any
Of art made by breaking
What flows from these veins will
Worth something someday if
Acknowledged, not taken
Not bandaged to save some
Finally just facing
Us down since we came to
The dark revelation
Undo what our parents
Did back when black faces
The tears that left trails when
Felons, former slaves, their
Who got just a taste of
Before it was taken
Who solemnly stated
Could come unless they were
Decisions, yes, making

This union, this nation
According to pages
And textbooks that make us
That it hardly fazed us
People died in flames and
Like fruit for the taking
Blue-blooded proud patron
Black hearts because maybe
Be worth something great, be
A day comes when pain is
For granted, not wasted
Of us from a fate of
The past that's been chasing
The stark realization
That nothing we say could
And what our grandparents
Were bloody and stained with
This country filled jails with
Descendants and name-sakes
Sweet emancipation
Away by the same folks
And swore that no changes
The ones who were making

The rules

Please understand
To bite the hand
Taught me to stand
Those who demand
Forefathers... fat
By shackled hands
And whip-smart backs
The burdens that
To say God had
Carried by black

That I'm not here
That fed me well
Stumble then swear
Allegiance were
From being fed
Fingers that bled
That learned to bear
This nation dared
Decreed were best
Beasts, three-fifths men

One curious fact?
Did God retract
The lesser man
Than any man
Tie him to land
Whose righteous hand
One people and
To dissolve bands
To tyrants, tax
Whatever past
Freedom from that

One question: "when
The law that said
Deserves much less
Whose blood and birth
And God himself
(Pure white) has blessed
Entitled them
That tether men
Collectors, and
Makes fools declare
Which proves that we're

All liars

On any other day

We could ask ourselves

What images
What sins, what names
Whose pain, what shame

Would we rather
Would we rather
Would we rather

Not see today
Not hear today
Not feel today

But today we must

We must

Yes, today we must

Hear and question
Feel the rush of
'Til we all are
Screams we sometimes

See and touch and
Real emotions
Reeling from the
Wish our songs could

Silence

So you

Must tell

Your story

Even when it is painful
Even when it seems pointless
Even when they erase you
Let your absence still haunt them

Be present

Proudly

Purposefully

Permanently

Though some may tether

Their benefits
Their victory
Their pro-motion
Their success
Their uplifting

To your detriment
To your defeat
To your de-motion
To your debasement
To your downfall and

Their education

To your ignorance

Still tell your story
But to give guidance
Who look for clues and
Of the courageous
Those weary trav'lers

No, not for glory
To those behind us
Follow the footsteps
Who blaze a trail for
Who will come after...

Us

So speak, strive, and struggle
Who have been through hell and
While here on this journey
You...

For you and for others
Doubt heaven and themselves
That weakened and wearied

Tell your story...

One day your own story will end
With every Dawn, every new day
America more than just great

So tell it now while you still can
We have another chance to make
But good—yes, truly good—again...

And again...

And again...

And again...

And again...

And...