



SOOT & STENCH

THE NIGHTMARE OF BLACKNESS IN BRITAIN

An essay by

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“There is a natural mystic flowing through the air, if you listen carefully now you will hear.”

—Bob Marley

On a curiously chilly August night in the lush, still plains of the Yorkshire Moors, there is a stiff westerly wind rustling in from the humid hilltops driving out the ubiquitous cloud of black smoke settled on the ground like a blanket of death. The glowing embers flicker as a fading reminder of what just occurred; the ashy ruin that remains lays lifelessly and already tells a tale. The starry sky seems mysteriously quiet in an unusual and ominous way tonight; almost like she offered a premonition. There is a definite tension in the air, a pregnant reckoning of something forbidden. My sweaty body quickens as I awaken, stumbling from a hazy, half-remembered dream. I instinctively hack up a lung trying to clear what almost vividly tastes like soot lingering bitterly on my tongue. The strange stench of death hovers over my lifeless body. It's seventeen minutes past midnight and I am drenched in a cold, nervous sweat shuffling the jigsaw pieces together of what just happened in my dream. The whispers grow louder, more harrowing, and persecutory as they echo what every nigger has ever been told is their place in this cold, white world.

It suddenly dawns on me that I missed a dose of my antidepressants last night again for the fourteenth night in a row, yet the annoyance is warmly comforted by the fact that I can get an

erection more easily off those wretched cock blockers. In a half attempt to relieve the knots in my innermost being, my back arches as I relax my shoulders, trying to squeeze out an anticipatory smile while arm wrestling the belly-clinging buckle of my denim pants.

I begin to dispassionately bash my flaccid manhood foolishly hopeful, but quickly relenting to the loudly unspoken truth that I was undeserving of pleasure.

I feel like an old, weary, and forgotten man in this youthful, dark-hued body; for pent-up rage has beset my supple joints with a rusty erosion, like a grinding Grandmother's hip: stiff, painful, and dysfunctional. A kind of rage that doesn't bubble up to the surface of my coffee-brown lips for the thought of its visibility frightens me. It pickles my brain like formaldehyde prepares my black mind and body for burial. There is a callous, disabling numbness that leads to self-neglect and malnourishment, a lack of attention to any details of the needs or desires of my body, which has become a familiar norm. I reach for a fingerprint-stained glass of stagnant water pushing past the clock on my cluttered bedside table to quench something that isn't yet clear to me. As I press my moistened lips against the glass which steams up under my belaboured breaths, I'm stunned by flashes of trauma that connect like Mike Tyson's fists; What is this drizzling of sweet revenge that beats the ground like epileptic fits of rage, quickly evaporating from my imagination soon after they arrive? I become almost convinced I've done something that I am not socially permitted to do. There is such a thing as the nigger's prerogative. Our place, our expectations, our particular vices, our limits. Taking one defiant step beyond the policed boundaries of our station is a perilous step too far for the negro. I have learned through societal indoctrination to conceal my contempt for what is; to ignore the putrid stench of our simultaneously living yet decomposing black bodies.

We black folk can't help taking notice of our corporate condition, while others turn a selectively blind eye. I've studied with clinical precision the way black bodies are both despised and envied, the deep and dark history tattooed in the skin wrapping our bones; yet whenever it's time to protect our dignity and promote our flourishing then pockets get shallow, hands get tight-fisted and we are lectured on the perils of learned helplessness through handouts. We are also often virulent conduits of our own despising; we encapsulate the programmed contempt of our bodies, culture, and spirituality like the mad cow disease that slowly erodes the brains of its unsuspecting victims. It's a peculiar world to be black where no matter how much money you make, how many letters are stacked in front or behind your name, regardless of your religious performance, your political alliances, or the side of town you live on: you are still just another feckless nigger to many.

The urge to drink comes over me so I stumble through the dimly lit room stepping over old dinner plates with dry half-chewed chicken bones, clattering zigzagged towards the staircase. I inwardly scold myself for the racket knowing I can't wake my children and have their certain harassment to endure. The air gets fresher as I leave my dusty den and slide my fingers down the old Victorian-styled banister towards the cellar. These 200-year-old houses have haunted basements, with the lingering smell of damp firewood, and its dark walls seem to be breath-holding the secret gossip of black servants only recently emancipated. Rusted bells that decorate the ceiling almost still chime, a reminder that the ghost of the Master could beckon at any time. They lived a sort of simple life. Their recently ransomed freedom was wholly invested in the comfort of their white aristocratic employers. The little they earned meant they had to remain working in conditions deleterious to their black bodies and souls in order to survive a society that only tolerated their

defiant existence. The ugly stuntedness of their quarters was a constant, suffocating reminder of their repellent existence, cramped under the extravagance of their master's home above. I could almost hear their coded conversations of their frustrations, yet they were freer than they had ever been before in recent memory. Somehow this wasn't enough to placate their audacious desire for more.

“Much hasn't changed,” I thought as I shrugged indifferently.

I pull open the wine cupboards as their rusty hinges squeal in protest, momentarily gazing at the labyrinthine decor on its peppered oak door. I grab a vintage Bordeaux wine I'd been saving for a day to celebrate that never came; because like Grandma used to say, a good wine was never to be wasted on indulgence. I began reaching for the largest glass I could find when I'm slightly embarrassed by the thought that I hadn't washed my hands after earlier below navel adventures. I ritually rinse my hands to get off any remnant of sin that glistened blue-black in the moonlight filtering through the basement window. I poured myself a glass of wine stiff-lipped, aloof, and began to sip with profound intention. I get philosophical with alcohol especially in excess, yet tonight I feel notably less inspired. Gazing obliquely towards the window I notice the moon seems more distant and not its usual self-giving nature offering something to vibe from. I reach for my mobile phone in my pocket to play what I knew would get the juices flowing. Ignoring the several missed calls from my boss, my therapist, and my pastor, I put on an old familiar song. The sultry tones of Nina Simone who I call the voice of God, as usual puts me in the mood to be frightfully honest with my inner child. She makes me sensually tactile, helps me recount what I would rather

forget, and helps me tell a story of pain that I'd rather anesthetize. Her voice carries me to a place of both deep anguish and anger... a sort of bitter cocktail that tastes like the funeral procession of a black child.

What was that dream about? The music fans my curiosity but the feeling becomes annoyingly familiar like this is a regular ritual of futility. The room expands and I start to feel the rage come over me again, my eye twitches, cool beads of sweat drip from my furrowed brows, and I remember the pictures of another police shooting of an unarmed black disembodied carcass in the United States. My head pounds fiercely again as I flash forward to the ritualistic cries for forgiveness from the black Christian community. I think to myself perhaps that's just an American phenomenon, racism and its performative denial isn't a British problem, we are more civilized than that as I comb my coarse dreadlocks nervously through my sweaty fingers. We Brits respect the rule of law and conscience. I tell myself that rhetoric unconvincingly as I nervously indulge more liquor and beat my chest to ease the heartburn. There are two main black narratives in Britain that dominate the societal understanding of our purpose and plight. Black as a problem and black as the victim. A strange seesaw between each dichotomy spins the current racist meta-narrative which is believed detached from history and simply understood as the consequence of nature's inevitability. We are a problem and victim of nature itself which explains how Europe was able to justify enslaving, destroying our culture and spirituality, and saving our souls through religious exploitation. We abide a nation that used Christian missiology to legitimize their racial prejudice and envy of indigenous people worldwide, giving them religion and taking away their resources as a divinely

mandated exchange. Churches were schools of cultural indoctrination for the enslaved to abandon their own spiritual practice to become more like white people for their salvation.

As my eyes continue to capture the ancient oppressiveness of this dark, stuffy basement, I'm almost blinded by this illuminating thought: It's the curse of the black immigrant to a white nation to always feel like a foreigner even when a fully participating, tax-paying citizen. It's like your contributions are paying rent in a house you will never own. No matter how much you earn, your level of education, or how useful you are, you can't sleep with both eyes closed for fear that you are violently awakened to the realization that British citizenship didn't make you English. As soon as you dare to discuss this reality here in England, you face exasperation and white frustration; only listening into such musings rearing to minimize, get defensive, or entirely dismiss. The most uncontested social myth in Great Britain is the idea of Englishness and whiteness being synonymous. The racism we face relies on the valiant, nationalistic effort to encapsulate blacks in the present, to deny, revise and romanticize the past- especially how every major western academic discipline and institution; both religious and secular, were complicit in making the bed of black suffering.

Teary-eyed and somewhat tipsy I ask, "Why do I feel so angry at the world and unable to let it out, unable to find an empathetic ear that won't sell me out."

There are very few spaces to be legitimately angry as a black man in Britain I continued to muse unceremoniously. Certainly, none without dire consequence or jaded judgment. Not at work where you are surrounded by white ideals, where white sensibilities are the arbiters of decorum and white respectability prohibits black indignation on every front.

Anger often emerges suddenly as my purest and most honest emotion. It is also my undoing, yet we live in a world where purity and honesty are considered the presumed birth right of whiteness. But anger—black anger, inherently makes my undoing deserving.

Respectability is the mask that so many of us use out of necessity to camouflage the visceral angst and internalized self-disdain that soaks our neurons and courses through our veins. It never heals the festering boils beneath its veneer that becomes exposed when we are alone and naked.

That anger is forbidden at church where religion's primary role is to keep your body and mind subdued and sanctified, contained and restrained, fit for Western exploitation and constantly demonizing our most honest and empirical emotions. We rehearse a religious affirmation of the poisonous rhetoric believed by white people about us; wretched sinners dead in the sins of our ancestors, sexual deviants, spiritually lost and in need of a whitened saviour and his missionary following. After all, Whiteness, our ability to acquiesce, perform and assimilate into its power to civilize us is our only redemption in a world governed by its predilections.

We sing freedom songs and hymns while enswathed in economic chains, hoping for what exactly? To bring down Jericho?

Nonetheless, I love the music we muster to soothe the emotional pain we tirelessly endure, but songs don't bring down the walls of this modern-day Jericho. You can sing "Break Every Chain" in every key and in every church service until you are blue in the face. Until there is a strategic takedown of oppressive political and economic systems that hold the keys to certain chains, they will remain unmoved by the unified chorus of black lament. Too much injustice and victim silencing have occurred with biblical injunctions concerning black folk which leaves me

unconvinced of the tenability of conservative religious spaces for black radicalism and liberation in this nation.

You can't be free to lament at the family home because black men who unleash the fiery angst of racial frustration there, taints the innocence of children, shattering their naïve sentimental expectations of the big white world out there. The big black man freely understands he is an imposing threat when roaming white streets with picket-fenced, well-manicured lawns and gold-plated toilets. He feels his size is a presumption of danger and desperately tries to make himself as small as possible to mitigate the harm anticipated. He might not readily notice this threat is often perceived in the home because of his rage, so he would do well to keep a naked flame of indignation smoking outdoors.

The disposition we are expected to produce in the face of white hostility is an enduring patience, never begrudgingly, and a humble, virtue-signalling gratitude for the opportunity to be here in any condition you find yourself. However, you must never make the erroneous conflation that such an opportunity is an inalienable right, irrespective of how hard you work or what you achieve for this nation or for yourself. We are permanently aware that we could be told to exit like Brexit on the day you show dissatisfaction with the reality of what it's really like to be black and British.

So, you inhale the contempt and anger and it begins the process of internal decay, you begin to lose your grip on your soul and your mind slips into oblivion.

I notice my heavyweight body as it droops into a drunken stupor and my inner self disdain begins to surface to the fore of my mind. There is nothing English about me, yet I know its

parameters so fucking well. Not even the accent I feigned to assimilate and refine my linguistic aesthetics ever gave me the slightest sense of national belonging. I've picked up some of their linguistic strategies through the years by not telling the hard truth about the hostility I've faced that has exacerbated my dis-ease.

For instance, the English are mostly known for linguistic diplomacy and euphemism in the way they express contempt for anything, especially their ethnic prejudices. But just like the black footballer on the national squad gets overt racial, dehumanizing, and xenophobic abuse for missing a crucial penalty, so it is when black folks miss the mark causing white inconvenience or exasperation. This is the visceral impulse of Britain when it comes to how she collectively views the black other when we drop the ball. She wants the exotic, sexually and physically high-performing negro to earn her upkeep, kicking whatever fucking ball she determines is in the best interest of the fledgling Empire. That's the history of the sentiment of this nation that is concealed when we dribble successfully. As long you learn English, culturally assimilate, pay taxes, appear otherwise respectable, you get somewhat shielded by the brunt of abuse until you fuck up just once too many. All of us black folks recognize the feeling of fucking up in good ol' Britannia and letting down the team, we recoil instinctively like an abused child anticipating some sort of heavy-handed and disproportionate chokehold.

The wine bottle by now's half-empty so like a philosopher, this prompts me to survey my life reflecting on when I first arrived in this country, the motherland as imprinted in my colonized imagination. I came here for the chance of a better life I thought. I left behind a sort of lukewarm naivety, having never been to Europe before leaving Jamaica the land of my birth. In Jamaica

nothing was beyond my aspirations or personal ambitions, nothing was remotely ordinary either. Everything was loud and in a vibrant rhythm. Everyone that mattered to me, looked like me. We didn't all get along and our nation had its own notorious problems, but I wasn't aware that my blackness would be controversial and a threat to a white European status quo. I boarded that one-way ticketed plane seat skinning teet' and brimming with every ounce of Jamaican bravado and courage. I must explicitly state that blackness wasn't something I intimately understood prior to my arrival to this nation. I didn't need to see myself as an abstraction, a colour from the spectrum, or perhaps all of them combined. My Jamaican bravado was tied to a rich cultural experience that backed it up. I didn't need to exhaustingly explain my dialect to get by, nor did I have to endure being fetishized as exotic, nor assumed less capable because of my skin colour or accent. My blackness prior to immigration was invisible but perfused my being skin deep. In many ways, I miss this pre-awakened naivety and obliviousness I had in the state of this invisible blackness. There was nothing to perform, nothing to prove in my conscious mind at least, and I had to give that up for something I had no frame of reference for.

Black visibility was something I got baptized into, an almost Pentecostal experience, and a very rude awakening. I witnessed the new-born anxiety of now having to explain what was once inexplicable. I had to grow up quickly to fit into the overbearing costume of blackness that I was forced to wear because of white anxiety around me. Finding another black face roaming the streets of Yorkshire brought a moment of welcome relief usually greeted by a brief nodded affirmation or an animated smile depending on the mood and climate. It was like we instantly knew each other's life experience just because of our hue—the hills and valleys, and could sing from the

same antique sheet music, the blues about what it meant to be black in Britain. I had dazzling glimpses where I unwittingly perceived that what was disdained in much of the dominant culture about blackness as ugly, was more beautiful than I could ever imagine. This beauty wasn't perfect like whiteness implicitly claimed to be, nor was it homogeneous, permitting one to find one's own niche, one's own voice, one's own catechism. Blackness is a body politic, a social orientation, a liberation struggle, a kind of existential rhythm that I had to come to learn was internationally embraced wherever darker-skinned people happened to find themselves oppressed by those deemed socially white. One thing is for certain, the unifying solidarity of blackness is so much more than the shade of one's complexion.

Coming to the UK as a teenager literally changed my world and challenged my core conceptualizations of personal and cultural identity. I very quickly discovered something was different enough about me to arouse suspicion. I had to assimilate into white expectations to excel which meant the ambitions I carried were rather bold for my station. Even UK-born black kids thought I was a little too uppity for their conditioned expectations. I loathed the ways I had to underplay ambition to earn the trust of the coolest kids, and I had to pretend to be an American rap connoisseur, emulating bars I didn't care for, to get the attention of girls and be the cool kind of black. There was always the regularly featured question of why I chose to leave Jamaica to come to England and did we all live in mud huts with outdoor toileting facilities. The often-noted irony for me was knowing that when my mother grew up in London in the 50's she had an outdoor toilet and my Dad who grew in Jamaica around the same time had luxurious indoor toileting.

I staggered my eyes about the room nervously in search of something that might anchor me to reality. The haziness from the liquor and the kind of dreamlike state has made me feel uneasy and queasy. I had a flashback of the night terrors that kept me up last night as being off my psych meds causes these horrible withdrawal partial dream states where I feel like I am being chased by hooded Klansmen.

White teachers were especially unafraid to remind me of my place at school, I nearly had my ambitions assassinated by my less than impressed white chemistry teacher. He looked at me as if I was a strange wart when I attended my first class and with a tone marked by condescension, asked me what my career ambition was. I told him excitedly I wanted to be a medical doctor, expecting more enthusiasm than what ensued like a gullible child. He looked me square in the face and started to laugh, then remarked frankly:

“If you became a doctor, I would never let you touch me with a bargepole.”

I became that doctor after a long and arduous journey but deep down I've always felt strangely unworthy to touch white patients and haunted by the feeling they all agreed with the bastard's contempt of me. I've never felt I had permission to really be angry about this exchange, I was expected to see this as the rite of passage of a nigger. There had to be a line in the sand circumscribing the white determined limits beyond which we shouldn't trespass. Enduring whiteness and surviving the ways it demands one to ritually purify their blackness under the tutelage of white normalcy. Why should white patients want me to touch their perfect bodies lest I contaminated them with my contagious and contemptible blackness? How much more do I need to excel and perform to prove I am just as good as my white colleagues? If I ever fuck up will I be

the scapegoat who must take the fall for the team? These are the haunting questions that would whip my conscience raw and bloodied but Nina Simone, comfort my mind, soul and body.

I reach for the bottle to pour another glass and almost predictably I pass point, knocking the bottle with my wrist, and in helpless horror watch it fall slowly to the ground clenching my sweaty palms tight as I anticipate the fracturing. There are no real prizes in this life for negroes. Just struggle, disappointment, and more pain. All gains either go to the taxman or you lose them all trying to assimilate while never truly being accepted. The bottle smashes into a million pieces as it hits the floor but I'm too inebriated to really care, but I can't help but notice it's the quintessential metaphor of my life.

I light a Cuban and blow a large ring of smoke into the air while trying to emulate Boris Johnson's voice saying.

"Sing on the stage for us, entertain us, wait on us, clean for us, nurse us and even marry us...give us that exotic service we know you can... but know your place and your role, we'll take it from there."

To understand the current racial dystopian nightmare of Britain it's helpful yet excruciating to reflect on the not too distant past. As it's been said, history doesn't repeat itself, but it most certainly rhymes. At this point, I'm drunk enough to be rendered unable to read the time on the old grandfather clock peering hauntingly in a darkened corner of the room but sober-minded enough to piece together fragments of what old relatives would say about what the '60s and '70s were like for black folks in the UK. An old newspaper cutting about Conservative MP Enoch Powell in an old scrapbook about immigration catches my eye. In his famous "Rivers of Blood"

speech in Birmingham, England 1968; he recounted a conversation with one of his constituents, a white middle-aged working man saying:

“If I had the money to go, I wouldn’t stay in this country... I have three children, all of them been through grammar school and two of them are married now, with family. I shan’t be satisfied till I have seen them all settled overseas... In this country, in 15- or 20-years’ time, the black man will have the whip hand over the white man.”

Powell went on to say:

“Here is a decent, ordinary fellow Englishman, who in broad daylight in my own town says to me, his Member of Parliament, that the country will not be worth living in for his children. I simply do not have the right to shrug my shoulders and think about something else. What he is saying, thousands and hundreds of thousands are saying and thinking—not throughout Great Britain, perhaps, but in the areas that are already undergoing the total transformation to which there is no parallel in a thousand years of English history. We must be mad, literally mad, as a nation to be permitting the annual inflow of some 50,000 dependents, who are for the most part the material of the future growth of the immigrant descended population. It is like watching a nation busily engaged in heaping up its own funeral pyre. So insane are we that we actually permit unmarried persons to immigrate for the purpose of founding a family with spouses and fiancées whom they have never seen.”

I angrily furrow my brows and clench my fists with violent intent and thinking to myself out loud.

“One can’t begin to understand the inextricable racist roots and white nationalism that underpins pervasive anti-immigrant sentiment in this country and Brexit is only the next chapter in this ongoing saga. Yet in spite of this black people are “overreacting” when we express frustration about the continued hostility this exacts on us in particular.”

Migrants fleeing ex-colonies of Britain were the first to come to her rescue after the War and the white populace was frightened by the waves of black and brown faces diluting her culture and racial purity. No one believes black Britons, even those who were born here, who report heightened racial hostility since Brexit. The bottom line is this I thought, I will never be considered a “decent, ordinary fellow Englishman” even if I became knighted after saving the Queen’s life. As I think about Powell, I can’t help to think about my Mothers parents, who docked in London on the Ship: Empire Windrush looking to help Britain rebuild in the ruins circa 1948. They were given the chilling reception of old fashioned colonial contempt and hardship, despite my grandfather doing what he could to help change attitudes then, he retreated to Jamaica with his family after realizing that anger from having to endure hearing his daughter—my mother, being called an ugly nigger monkey, would land him in jail. But most of his friends didn’t have the luxury to flee, they remained and chose the suffering here as they felt trapped between a rock and a hard place.

The white middle-aged working man who expressed his fear about being under the whip of the black man says so much about the psyche of whiteness. It projects its own malevolent predilections onto others as universal, as if it’s reasonable to expect that black people would want to oppress white people if the tables were turned. Black people by large just want the same things everybody else wants in this world: justice and equal opportunity.

At some level, much of the unrest we experience within and witness around us is a manifestation of white collective paranoia about change. That's what drives national politics; primitive fears about the changing demographics, as more brown faces threaten white resources, as queer people demand marriage equality, as women stand tall in a world engineered for and by men. White men are afraid they will be forced to surrender the whip they have benefited from to a darker, less deserving mutiny. There will always be a push and a pull between elements within the dominant majority and pivotal change necessitated by the slowly rising tide of justice for the marginalized.

The day inevitably arrives, least expectedly, that your body can't contain the pressure of the constant condescension, derision, hypercriticism, and unfair demands to out-perform your white colleagues before you are taken seriously. Much isn't expected of you in the first place truthfully, so you spend time flying your conspicuous black arse below the radar. But when that day comes, you can't predict what you might do. The anger you feel is so forbidden, so cursed and you are expected to internalize this and let it wreck you through a black vice and become another black statistic.

It's been 100 days and I've awakened to this recurring dream that I can't quite distinguish from reality. Calm, collected and professional white men surround me donned in white capes. The kind of capes I once donned in my days as a medical student I considered. The most fresh-faced and timid one grabbed my notepad from the wooden table in my room. He seemed perplexed and frustrated, as if he was about to chase out to the hallway in an emotional scramble but held himself together as he squeezed the life out of his pen. He was handsome, frighteningly so, and on closer

inspection, he appeared to be mixed with something, there was an exotic flair to his otherwise white adjacent appearance. He read aloud reluctantly a summary of why I was in this strange unfamiliar place and the futility of my stay so far. I have not uttered a word in silent defiance to these men, to anyone since being committed. I said everything I ever wanted to say that fateful, fiery day. The collective rage of a hundred thousand male slaves possessed my body, channelling the unexpressed frustrations they felt they had neither the agency nor opportunity to release. It sounds like I snapped that day, I told the world a few things they never anticipated from a nigger that they entrusted their proximity to. I rubbed shoulders with the best of them, but by then Baldwin's prophecy of the fire next time had come to pass.

Reacclimated with an intoxicating rage.

I can feel its destabilizing tremor.

A venomous flavour released as my desiccated tongue presses onto the cracked roof of my mouth.

Choked up, with reddened eyes of fire,

Languishing in a fever of the soul.

Bloodshed brings my blood to boil,

A slow simmer.

Another lifeless, blue-black body, glowing in the moonlight of white supremacy and casting its haunted shadows on my fragile mind.

A mind now bursting at the seams, about to fracture.

I am undone.

Scrawled on my notepad were some of what I told the world, what I wrote down as I dropped a match on the kerosene-soaked carpets of the false reality I abode. Whatever I wrote announced that my valiant efforts to appease white respectability were expired. This was the other side of performing for the acceptance and applause of whiteness. The illusion of personal progress was shattered and unceremoniously replaced with a diagnosis of despair. I could no longer impress white people with the facade of perfection nor the unfair burden that their mistakes were a sign of humanity but my mistakes a sign of incompetence.

I told them I've abided enough religious and white hegemony for one lifetime, giving notice on trying to negotiate the worth and acceptability of my own courageous spirituality and blackness in either lattice of limitations.

I announced that if their racist or religious expectations of me leaves them disappointed in my anger, then they needed to drop those expectations. It was now clear that I was no longer able to appease white culturally indoctrinated preferences about decency and respectability. I made them listen to the maddening revelation that living as black and disembodied in England is violently soul-destroying, and it takes way too much energy to convince myself another day is worth living in this suffocating cesspool.

To the colour-blind and indifferent types, I explained, If racism doesn't highly enrage you then that's unsurprising. It likely means you are unaffected by the reliable way it works, the burden it exerts on one's soul. It may not exist in your parameters of reality and for that, I guess you are exceedingly fortunate and to be envied. I reassured them of their freedom and privilege to be

indifferent and unmoved by the internal shiver and social anxiety we face but to be fully aware they are complicit in our suffering.

With those words, the fire consumed my lungs like the Grenfell Tower in London lit up the 2017 summer sky, and a thick volcanic cloud of black smoke emerged from my lips with apocalyptic flair and disturbing violence. There was a virtual audience, of mostly white gaze that stood in jaw-dropped disbelief.

People have come to fear angry black people because they live in a society that has benefited from the bankrolled, state-sanctioned, civilian-endorsed demonization, colonization, exploitation, and genocide of our ancestors, theft of their lands of origin; and are reasonably petrified of what black people might do when enough of them awaken to this reality and are fed up of being treated like the criminals their white ancestors were.

“He is crazy.” they shrugged, the best way to dismiss engaging with the inconvenience of my vulnerable ramblings.

They thought in bewilderment and replied,

“This is that black rage our ancestors forewarned of that they spent their stolen wealth desperately trying to suppress. The diagnosis is Black Apoplexy”

Because we won't tell the blazing truth about our national conscience pertaining to race, so most are frozen in their ancient racial fantasies while others remain tormented in a hellish racialized nightmare.