

On Passing (or Notes toward a Manifesto)

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In a dream, a young Baraka slaps five with my father.
They ask when I last got some pussy or whooped
someone's ass? On one side of the street are the black poets
(their closed memberships, spider-fingered hand-shakes,
invitation-only parties) tossing my journal with my father—
Bullshit, Bullshit, Bullshit! I'm soft-spoken. He's bullhorn.
I believe in breaths. We're both sensitive. I do not deserve
to be his son. I didn't suffer like my father. Don't fit in
any boxes with bars. Never served time (except once at Bellevue
for 17 days). I retreat in ambiguity. Live between the lines.
Prefer shadow to light. I do girl push-ups. Write on the mirror
with my mother's lipstick. I'm nothing like my father.
I spend my recesses reading *When the People Could Fly*,
Black Skin, White Masks, & *Metamorphosis*. I visit Harlem
with my 35mm in search of jazzmen. I'm paranoid. My palms
stay moist. Long before I wake from this dream, there's your voice
& Baraka's, the broken limbs ghosting our family tree, you
and Baraka mouthing to me: *This life. . . is a . . . relay . . . race . . .*
and in a single hand motion—*Catch!* And that look on your faces.
The pause. The lean in. The reveal.