

EDIBLE, BUT UGLY

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Winner of the Amendment 2015
Literary Contest: Poetry Category

Respect is wit
 unpredictable it lives
 between public and private
 which is why
 our lives are as intense as they are sudden
 we cross roads to be respected we exit too
 we stand accused with the weight of an unshaped
 hunger
 our doubts pregnant and outnumbered by a unilateral
 need to be politically correct
 we inherited it, this debate room its linoleum floors its
 waxed opinions
 we are eating dirt to avoid peer censure
 we taxidermy ourselves to keep from having to
 consider the innuendos of small talk
 an exact fear
 a metallic taste
 an anthem
 a menagerie maybe
 blackness demands too much from us
 all I have left is a fatigue and a fear that my bad breath
 might ruin my friendships
 how asinine
 how eager we are to argue, to be consumed
 to maximize our potential.
 To become The Ballot or the Bullet*

**Malcolm X's "The Ballot or the Bullet" is the title of a public speech by human rights activist Malcolm X which was delivered on April 3, 1964, at Cory Methodist Church in Cleveland, Ohio.*