

the new plymouth (also known as NePly), 1620-20??

**as told thru tiers*

*goodbye west oakland/ohlone shellmound/killmore/tenderloin/bayview/mission/downtown los angeles/southside
chicago/detroit/south bronx/spanish harlem/black harlem/crown heights/flatbush/bed-stuy/williamsburg/bushwick/red
hook/sunset park/newark/west philly/dc/new orleans/atlanta/east austin/west baltimore/whitelock/north avenue/east
baltimore/lafayette courts/flaghouse courts/lexington terrace/murphy homes/park heights/*

in your names i pray

ase

pre-tier 1.

you followed a notion
you would find cheap rent
& vacant lands untold
from the fixed gear the road trip the jet blue ticket
you make the long trip in clusters
cross purple mountains & shining seas
peter rabbit hoppin
from 1st
to 2nd tier

from bays to glass windows stacked to clouds
a return to the rush to gold and treasure untold

the scabs on our hoods are being dug at
band-aid solutions
& neglect

caused infection

to settle

& now

you settle

tier 1.

your
chuck taylors
tiptoe
off
trains
with a
timbuk2 bag
& cutoffs

your shovel urban farm-ready
your ground rules for co-op living handy
your cats not included in your lease

(they who secretly yearn to end up on “lost cat” fliers
next to missing black & latinx girls)

you cruise thru the blocks
with herculean invincibility
despite your invisibility
from these blocks
one decade prior

*we didn't ask to be their crooked ponytail stepchildren/murderers/inmates/kingpins/lookouts/corner boys/call girls/cause
for call outs/absentee womanizers/pregnant/planned parenthood waiting room patient/as if we are a species cursed/
by absence of love*

ready
for demolition
at any given
swoop
of the pen
from city hall

lusting after tourism
& renewing the reputation
they shattered along with us stepchildren

*amerikkka
blaming their kids*

*the unfit parent
without viewing their own errors*

tier 2.

so i ask you yes you
why
here
why
now?
beyond saying *the rent* is *cheap*

when your
pursed lips
have the right to remain silent

when i pass you & your NWA shirt
on the sidewalk

you ask me why so hostile
when i address whiteness to you i am barking
loudly against our history discovered at the bottom of quicksand

sidewalks
long cruised by
peeptoe shoes penny loafers
hushpuppies platforms reeboks adidas
filas air force ones timberlands stilettos
pumps slippers cuz every block
is home

and you up in our living room
with your shoes & won't even speak

now we being evicted some leaving willingly
taking hikes like rent out of sight mind & news camera clip

until
you have a festival
& them niggas show y'all
what's underneath the scab
when gunshots ring
down the street
from art galleries

tier 3.

the city sees you

as neosporin to our wounds

gutted factories once
packed with dusty blacks

turned

loft sacks with 6
splitting a 3 bedroom

liquor store

turned

lemongrass thai house

busted fire hydrant

turned

bike rack

middle school

turned

half-vacant condominium

high school

turned

police training facility

to protect & serve you
& your lost macbook

boarded storefront

turned

crusty punk squatter house

project debris

turned

private realtor fee

your college degree

turned

doorstop

got you fulfilling lifelong dreams

of authenticity

got most of us

mad as hell

at you

but we're all out of words

our energy deep fried

so you

become

columbus *nextdoor*

the collect call of the trumpet has sung.

do we have to accept charges

for what our neighborhood dreams

have become?

*hello west oakland/emeryville shopping district/soma/tenderloin/fullmore/bayview/nobe/downtown la/hyde
park/pilsen/bronzeville/detroit/sobro/spaha/morningside heights/crown heights/flatbush/bed-stuy/williamsburg/east
williamsburg/red hook/sunset park slope/newark/university city/graduate hospital/ward six/southeast
dc/noma/nola/atlanta/east austin/station north/mica/reservoir hill/park heights renaissance/greenmount west/inner
harbor east/hopkins east/*

in your shifted names

i resist

ase'

landscape 4 the home/less

**inspired by Yusef Komunyakaa's "Landscape for the Disappeared"*

looka here yes chipped bricks
in baltimore the dead
homes crumble like chalk
our sidewalked floors & fences
come back to us in helix
rat-gnawed & roach nibbled
all the has-been sofas
& shelves hurled in a month's time
into scattered apartments cross the city

blackened grass & gum
supporting these buildings to heights
black folks aren't made for faces
fireproofed into their own
formidable expression intolerable
answers on our lips
punchdrunk policemen rise
from reagan's hands
to push us out
guilty screams the nightly
anchormen paid to advertise
our apartheid convince
us fifteen years is mandatory at minimum

we ache for the homes
we used to know their tales
underneath our hairs
the soot's slow swallow
gulps sounds a gutter rainbow
stomped like cassette tapes
popping in boom boxes in living rooms
railroads of manchild
negroes & sapphires seized
through the years

our bitter kids so trapped with bricks taped to their socks their scowl
a place where albums sell all the hope emptied grey as gutter bones' grizzle
count to one we are worth nothing

**a rat race to the bottom
(or, yet another eulogy)**

a rat
died out back so
it's gon be a while
before you can walk
thru the alley without
holding your breath
right now it smells
like the valley of the
shadow of death

what is left of
this rat a reeking
reminder of what
is left of our rights

but oh this is all too
commonplace to us

and i had to ask myself
why we hate rats so much
why every time we try
to sweep our city's slate
clean on silver screen a rat
climbs up the wall of the theater
of our minds why
we slice the necks
of rats' throats
for singing like sinatra
breaking the codes
of the rat pack
cuz every nigga
still hypnotized
by the book of frank white
we packed like gats
we packed like rats
and live right long wit em

they closer to us
than we'd ever care to admit
closer to us
than our infant cribs
which collapsed into
crime scene when
that rat bit sister nelle
with whitey on the moon
slicing swallowed milk
from newborn throats

this is all too commonplace to us

yes even with masters
now moved to crate
never finding its way
to wall (a muted
and very expensive lesson
in obedience)
i still must muster
the strength
to look away each time
my third eye gets a glimpse
of mangled matter
body formerly inhabited
as rat body
formerly inhabited
as black which
am i even discussing
anymore
we merge into one
in murder and martyrdom
that rat was somebody's matriarch
just like that rat was somebody's son
pit-bulled against his brother
a dog eat dog fight
never won

a social experiment (tuned to the frequency of baltimore club)

"Like colt 45, it works every time" -Billy Dee Williams

I. OUT MY - OUT MY - OUT MY WAY!!!!

arrive on the same sidewalk as a white couple / at about the same speed / lurk on the curb deciding /
whether or not to intrude / your black oil spill / across this space /
p l e a s e m o v e a t a g l a c i a l p a c e /

or run to pass them / or decide to stick behind //

these the maddened musings / which mark black minds / that we don't tell you about / ears too full
of cotton / than to ever hear us out / same cotton which produced / bolls which stung my grandmas fist /
same cotton stitched / into open arch of baseball caps from lids / exposed medulla oblongatas / forgetting to
merge / to make space for others to roam / to give room for one's own / you walk as though no one else / is
allowed on the block / on the earth / at the same / time as you

so i lurk / behind hoping / to watch a bended knee clip / buckle with beltways / as my black body enters

allow room for transition between tracks

II. HEY GRIFF...BRING IN THE KATZ!

or do you burrow / down blocks on bikes / with the booming system / dangled off sides of swedish thule
bags / upheld with fragile / basketball nets / (even my backside is colonized)

OHHHHHHHH!!!!

as they turn back / eyes asking *what's that* / sound that static / that dare disturbs comfort /
heaven forbid we make whites flinch / anymore than they could shake a whip at

YESSSSSSS!!!!

but with lil jon like collision / i turn down / for what / when your nose is turned up / your fragility fickle /
and fuel for black folly

OHHHHHHHH!!!!

your frowns are farce and / i swear on the fonz of your forefathers / i live to make you wince / to ruin your
sunday / monday / happy days

OHHHHHHHH!!!!

to reveal the very floors / beneath shell shocked / shellacked gentrified grins

OHHHHHHHH!!!!

some of us still know / what used to exist / before hashtags / and emoji fists / symbolized the extent / of
your unlearning

YESSSSSSSS!!!!

these sidewalks / like charles and calvert street / blind spots stitched into the backs /
of white butterflies, swerving

*(to the paradox,
to the whole damn choices,
you already know.
you already know.)*