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2 poems

by Akilah Toney

Cousin Tiffany Was Levitating

Family members gathered in a half-painted peach house fish grease crackled in the air and hot crawfish wooed flies family members grouped around the DJ and did their number black Speakers blasted bumping sousaphones black Speakers blasted stinging trombones

Cousin Tiffany sipped from her white cup bells started ringing and her head started bobbing everybody clapped their palms bright red she spun and jived with her torso, her ribs became rhythmic melodic yeahs and rhythmic ayees vibrated

Cousin Tiffany smiled a big ol' smile

Cousin Tiffany step-skipped with her heart syncing with the second line beat

her body lifted into the air and her toes wiggled with sound waves

her gold tooth became the sun waking the black night
her arms swung wide open captivating eyes
and her skinny brown braids gyrated and floated
Levitate! Levitate! Levitate!

Sugarcane

Succulent pleasures grow tall,

Men riding with leather whips bawl,

Blister,

Blister,

Chop,

Work in the yolky sun harvesting crops,

Before the chicken belts and the locusts yell

The working peoples consult and repulse,

'Cross the Atlantic sea rotten teeth indulge,

White cubes of gluttony dissolve in teas

And seep into breads and cakes with ease

A viscid sweetness to die for,

A viscid sweetness people are dying for,

Machetes slice through thick juices,

Plump welts and bruises form on backs,

Calluses thicken on feet, as the virescent canes snap,

Do

Da

Do

Da

Do

Da

Sing songs of secret, wrapping freedom in music notes,

Wade, swing low, ache no more following the path,

Oh I pray they feel the working peoples' wrath!

Akilah Toney is a published writer, dancer, actress, and photographer living in New Orleans, Louisiana. She uses the arts to express her experiences as a young Black Girl living in the South. Using writing as a method of activism, Toney explores African dance and meter/rhyme in poems to convey her voice, telling stories about race relations in America, marginalized communities, and internalized racism. Her poems "Cousin Tiffany Was Levitating" and "Sugarcane" showcase her unapologetic willingness to discuss untold histories and experiences as a New Orleans native. She is a high school student majoring in Creative Writing at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts.