

Next Time *(a meditation on ancestral memories)*

wading into reflections
immersed in the roar of the crowd
free Cathy walked toward the center of the earth
lowered her torch to the still waters
ignited a running ring
the fire dance surrounded her
please do not let them burn her

logic said they left her a way to escape
they won't burn her she's their only
Aboriginal symbol
pioneer and champion
reason replied they burn symbols have
incinerated pioneers may sacrifice champions
do not let them burn her

she would make such a glowing sacrifice
consecrate the games fire their spirits
purify the hemorrhaging history of
Down Under's new world order
so brave her grace in silent
running waves all around her
do not let them burn her

a sly miracle woman she
escaped the burning
stepped clear of the ring
leaving the fire this time
and faced the arena
where the crowd waited
for the games to begin

[won first prize, Detroit Writers Guild, 2002]

Written for the Late Oscar Grant

[Fruitvale BART station, Oakland CA, January 1, 2009]

*my country 'tis of thee
sweet land of liberty
of thee I sing*

did you know before today
a bullet fired in disdain,
callous indifference
into a young father's back
as he lies face down on harsh cement
will power through, race through
his body prone
bounce off the pavement cold
and splash back into vital organs
like the heart and spirit and soul,
leaving no room for compromise,
explanation or forgiveness
and no time to say goodbye
to his beautiful baby daughter?

but you know now...

of thee I sing

[for Oscar Grant]

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Jeanne Powell (<http://jeanne-powell.com>, <http://redroom.com/author/jeanne-powell>) is a poet and short story writer, who teaches in a summer program for teens. Her most recent books are "*My Own Silence*" and "*Word Dancing*," available online and through booksellers. She also hosts spoken word events in San Francisco, and covers cultural happenings for online media.