

## **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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