

Kelly Gaffney Emling

IN THE COLONIES

Inspired by: “Night, For Henry Dumas” by Aracelis Girmay,
& “Muse Found in a Colonized Body,” III & XI, by Yesenia Montilla.
In conversation with Guy Debord’s *The Society of the Spectacle*, chapter 2, “Separation Perfected.”

Whiteness like smoke seeping
across the land.
Windows and doors no shield.
No sanctuary
in your living room Botham Jean
or playing video games with your nephew Atatiana Jefferson.

Walking home
after drumming at your church Manuel Ellis

from oh thank heaven for 7-Eleven Trayvon Martin
 with Skittles and Arizona Iced Tea
 from getting tea Elijah McClain
 so gentle you played violin to calm shelter kittens.
 “Let go of me. I’m an introvert. Please respect the boundaries that I am speaking.”
 Choked and deluged with ketamine by first responders
 who patrol colonies of their imaginations.

Selling cigarettes Eric Garner
 selling CDs and DVDs Alton Sterling
 fatal \$20 bill tendered by George Floyd.

Pleas of

“I can’t breathe!”

Chronicled retorts of

“I don’t care.”

Fallacious oaths to protect and serve,
 for whites only.

A cellphone in your hand
In your grandmother's backyard Stephon Clark,
leaving your friend's garage Chef Andre Hill.
After they shot you they
left you on the ground
watched your lives extinguish.
Paper property deeds
obscured the white shroud
over your existence.

Out driving like we all do,
our cars hum with illusory freedom.
But whiteness snakes the highways, curtains and hounds.
Gun instead of taser to purge your air freshener, Daunte Wright?
Philando Castile cafeteria supervisor,
you came to school early to help disabled children

but your traffic stop lasted only forty seconds.

And Sandra Bland, on the road of your alma mater
historically Black Prairie View A & M University
a short distance from a plantation burial ground

Texas trooper detained you for changing lanes without signaling
most notoriously pretextual but
instead of a ticket—arrest, jail, death.

Sanctioned patrols preserve the colonies.