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Part II: Awakening

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PART II AWAKENING

i have heard from my grandmothers mouth
of why her skin is so light
why her hair is so straight
how her mother was the same
and how she got that way and the evil man that found his
way into our blood
(who was that man I would think to myself?)

i have heard my grandfathers story of
leaving the eighth grade
never to go back
to sweat under the fiery North Carolina sun
so that he could help feed eight hungry mouths
all of them family
but none his children

and i hear the cautious whisper of my grandmothers voice
when she says "black"
and in 1993 will still say
"colored"
without a wink and with a sense of pride

and i think of the story my mother told me
of cleaning bathrooms
in the department store downtown
because in 1965 that was what she could get

and i hear the stories and
watch the tears of my family,
their pain, their deaths, the opportunities lost
and the bodies set aflame
and i see the stories of my family
becoming real again when i see
Tawana Brawley, Rodney King, the wino in my neighborhood
even when i think of the bullets that ripped open
Malcolm's chest
or
Martin's neck

and i think of all these things
as i lay here
and i ask why am I lying here
next to you
letting your blue eyes pass over my brown face
and your pitifully suntanned hand slide over
my hip.
can you tell me why I am still here... naked with you?

do you really hate me after all these years?
can I really love you after all the scars?
are you that man from so long ago?

– N.N.C. '94



– Jamie Oliver '94