A Negro, in the City

This one's to the Negro boy

the negro in the city

maybe I'm your Mama

Boy

maybe I'm your biddy

probably your woman

spouse

sister or

your friend

or maybe just

a neighbor pal

childhood

been playing at the park

since ten

This one's to that too dark girl Sapphire

angry with color

a blackened tongue

caste an ugly shade of ostracism

thinks she ain't worth the same

because her black screams motherland

matches burnt brown toast

can't be hidden, at all.

This one’s to the light-skinned Lucy

the princess crowned fairest of them all

who pass down the street

head high

false confidence

false hair

false lashes

she too good for us.

And this one

be for her mama

The mama I gonna be

when I worry

‘bout my own

little black boy or girl

who I’ll ‘ventually

turn free

Will my black boy

drop into a sea of rainbow colored candy?

Will my black girl

try to run

free

escape face down

like other lil’ black chillin’

with his pants down low

with her blood drenched

in a black hoodie?

This one's for my mama

the mama I'm gonna be

the mama who gon' taught me

when

and

how

a Negro

should run

free.

But mostly,

this one for my papa

the papa I 'll 'ventually marry

the papa who 'gon raise my sons

teach 'em what it mean

to be a little black boy please

comb your Afro

brush your teeth
always look cleaner than clean

never talk back to the police

by the age of ten,

little black boys

need understand

police brutality and

when

and

how

a Negro

boy

should run

free

in the city.

--
Maya Richard-Craven
University of Southern California 16'