

Lower Ninth, April 2006

I. "Bad Moon Rising" came on the radio
on the Pontchartrain Causeway bridge.

The orange X's and the tally
of bodies, *TFW* a blood hex
that says do not cross this threshold
without a triage of masks.

We unraveled our sleeping bags
in a third floor classroom at St Mary of the Angels
Yankees come South unsure how else
to help the living rebuild.

On the chalkboard, a survivor's message:
*We stayed for three days, waiting for the Coast Guard and when they flew over they ignored us.
When we ran out of food and water, we had to go.
They left us here to die.
RIP Trayvaughn, Yana SJ, Big Eric, Lil Susie, Mikey, Trice Lumumba, OG Fred, Victor, Gracie,
Sandy B, Air Jordan, Jr King, Mere Rice, Mr. Evers, Cyn, The Reverend Doctor, Rennie Ma*

I spent the week hitting bathroom tiles with a sledgehammer,
or trying to salvage photo albums and school books.
The Red Cross tried to feed us hot dogs as if it was our block
while we were eating po boys and Red Stripe on a stoop.

Packs of dogs gone feral patrolled the unlit
parking lots, and plenty of locals than would tell you
how they heard the government detonate the levee.

II. On the third day, new white folks arrived, and unrolled their bags.
Two pony-tailed girls read the chalkboard and called it a lie.
A circle of ghosts sucked their teeth.

When they took erasers to the board,
I wanted to tackle them, but froze in disbelief
at the haywire minds of savages,
their insistence upon looking dead
into our ineffable faces
and treating
our many deaths
as our biggest deceptions
and our only proper attire.