

ain't no tumin' back
 (a dialogue about assignment)

it's been a long time/ since I've been able to cast my dreams/ into
 a world burned behind the eyes/ see/ I've erased all traces of
 being/ /I bathed myself in numbness/ and become a bundle of
 enhanced shadows/ kiss me and replace myself in this burning/
 so I don't have to wonder/ what life would be like/ if you loved
 me

what would life have been like/ if you'd loved me/ if we had created
 a sign/ that said No Trespassing/ under penalty of law/ and people
 had paid attention/ would it have mattered/ everyday/ we get closer
 to dying/ starting with the day we're born/ does this sound harsh/
 well/ immaturity is not an option/ in a world based on necessity/
 and these are the facts/ I submit/ life is simple/ it's the living that
 complicates things

in a world where/ unearned privilege masquerades as strength/
 and howling wind echoes/ in veins meant for the human spirit/
 can you truly profit/ from agony/ When your name is a mock-
 ery/ and your homeland/ a tenement/ and even revolutionaries/
 are shedding tears/ When token success/ is equated with over-
 coming/ And activists are deemed unnecessary/ When the color
 that's shaped centuries/ no longer matters/ except/ for those who
 have it/ and/ those who don't/ When the root of power/ is decep-
 tion/ and history/ is the winner's side/ must every hole/ be a void/
 and every hill/ an obstacle/ I'm telling you rain can fall/ from a
 sunny sky/ learn me/ and solve the riddle/ of yourself

I don't plant roses anymore/ and luxury is no longer/ a birthright/
 knowledge stands guard at my bedside/ accompanies my dreams/
 and is my first vision when I wake/ it sometimes takes an invasion
 of blindness/ to resurrect sight/ you know/ and I know/ that words/
 are mere attempts / at capturing meaning/ and giving it name/ but
 try to dig what I'm sayin'/ in the spirit of all things Black/ and
 Beautiful/ and/ Black/ success can never be individual again/ be-
 cause/ once upon a time/ I learned you/ and fell in love/ with me

come/ wrap yourself in quilted wind/ and give yourself to the
 breeze/ wanna fly/ you gotta give up what weighs you down/ af-
 ter a while/ you don't miss it anyway/ why can't goats and men/
 piss side by side/ with a mutual respect/ for privacy/ of course/ if
 the rot of dying dreams/ is muted by the stench of garbage/ fer-
 menting in tropical streets/ .../ comfort is irrelevant/ and conve-
 nience is a non-entity/ this world/ ain't gonna be nobody's para-
 dise no way/ give me what is left/ and I will create life/ complete
 with ringing laughter

here's what I'm sayin'/ frivolous activities no longer amuse me/ I
 engage in necessary acts/ like playing attention to cloud configura-
 tions/ and taking notes on sunsets/ my eyes are stained with memory/
 and there ain't no/ turnin'/ back

Shani O'Neal