

## MISSISSIPPI

Muck of the past bent back under whip, over wretched soil wet with sanctified blood flowing river feeding roots to the hanging tree by cotton fields that carry ddt and the cancer that runs in the family. Mama Emma's house white on the outside, colors inside, perched on cement pilings, ready for flight from the cotton field runway. That is the only way she will ever leave, like Dorothy, if the house grows wings, picks up and flies away. Across the way the trailer houses of even poorer than poor lean forward to catch some opportunity from a fast car flinging dust or mud from a highway here where history is the stars and bars that do fly, and daily life is porch sitting and waving to the passer-by. We wave to everyone that passes on foot, bike or car. Here comes young Mr.-One-beer-at-a-time walking to Uncle Willie James' store to get one more.

That is what there is to do if you rur'l. Wave. Or drink. Or sit. If you live in a town, like Tchula, you can join the young men on the walk in front of the laundromat. If you live down the highway in a bigger town like Lexington you will see apt complexes where young men scope the girls that live there, some already baby on hip, looking at you as a way out of they two bedroom box.

You could work. Miss'sippi's got chemical, catfish and cotton. But you know them people at the chemical plant, like that clorock place down there? Got sick a lot. And the catfish, well you don't see black with catfish ponds. And the cotton, well you know they use machines for that mostly. Now Peaches an' her husband got good jobs with the county, in the sanitation dept. You know, garbage collection? But if they don't get the raise they deserve, they quittin'.

I am back in *southern* California spilling Miss'sippi's blues on the back of a yellow flier that says I can bring peace in my life by yogic breathing, but I have been to Miss'sippi and I have seen stillness is just the absence of motion, like breathing is not walking, not running, not lifting, and never flying except in your mind. And when all motion is denied, by all means, breathe. Breathe like your life depends on it.