

Of Broke Glass *and* Green Grass

Born negro navy hatched in quonset huts  
eyes stitched to a grey shape off the pier  
tracked daddy to a distant line halfway to the sky

we lived in new England with no seatbelts  
Chrissie and I held to a cord attached to our parents seat,  
rode through snow in a pontiac with no floorboards  
clutching sunday school dimes

we were always moving when daddy got orders  
coast to coast black to white to black to white, city to burb  
navy negro made me odd as Calypso and daddy's  
quick clipped words; british wool in the islands and  
mommy's typewriter with an en-ya,  
our red island primer phonetics

in the d.c. alley the neighbor kids said we talked  
funny knocked us down then made friends  
taught us double dutch  
and jumping red rover over onto broken bits of glass and cement  
'stead of green grass

Suburbs silenced me until a curse split my mouth  
on the color line  
crossing the college classroom, pulled full lip smiles  
outta my first Black professor and didn't die He was good-  
looking with a moustache and a Porsche, cool came  
kept changing and I kept chasing, knew it wasn't sitting  
behind the *Go Navy* sign on our new used station wagon even  
if we were flashing truckers peace signs,  
there were no places to belong to  
even grown and remarried with my own big mouth kids,  
even when  
the island customs guy claimed me by face and family  
and we werent  
navy negro different from black  
we were island Bequia people gone  
to america who didn't come back

but then I thought they were weird didn't cuss  
but sucked their teeth  
in disgust I travel time, find home in moments from memories  
eyes on a grey shape on a distant line halfway to the sky  
could be a dolphin  
keeping still like texas relatives moving my mouth like Calypso