

# **WHERE WE STAND**

**Poems of Black Resilience**

Introduction by  
**ENZO SILON SURIN**



## American Predator

I.

Take and feel, this  
is my body, the body you  
will size up, squeeze in the name  
of the rusted-out factories of Ohio.  
In the name of the unemployed miners  
of West Virginia. Men  
inhaling promises like tar and nicotine.  
While the mountaintops shudder  
in a pock-mocked landscape.

Take and swipe this pussy  
as a credit payment for the wall  
blocking the Mexicans, the people  
you say take our jobs as you take  
our healthcare our immigrants  
our water our air as you take  
as you take as you take.

II.

Every conquest begins this way.  
A swipe of pussy, a pinch of ass.  
This is my body. This is our body.  
This is my blood. This is our blood.  
Which will be shed for his mirror image.  
Crowds screaming. Signs flailing at rallies.  
This is not a sacrament.  
This is the beginning and the end.

## Hopes

Summer solstice. Parties of people  
startled by the familiar.  
Celebrating the sun that radiates light  
until 10 at night.

Another moving company.  
Boxes lined with fresh newspapers.  
Dishes photos books packed.

Curtains ordered for the windows  
that open the air to six rooms.  
Bunk beds bought for girls' aching adolescence.  
This house will stick. We'll stick with this house.

It will work out. Dad will keep working.  
Summer solstice. Summer festival.  
Yesterday. Today one minute closer to winter dark.

MICHELLE M. TOKARCZYK

## Practicing Mindfulness While Writing Letter to Voters

Once the curves of script were embedded in my fingertips. But for years I've tapped keys, forgetting the mother tongue of penmanship. So, I strain to train these hands again. Resist the urge to clasp my pen, but rest it as it leans back forming the open loops of y's and j's, the sharp cross that tees a t. Press blue shapes into pages white as eggs. The synagogue slaughter, the pipe bombs delivered to homes—flashbacks of news I note and let go as I address strangers, fold letters in envelopes like babies in blankets. Stamp and seal with my saliva. When I mail them I will release twenty packets of hope. There.

## Elegy for a Young Queer Writer

*for Mia and Anna*

Rana Zoe, I never knew you—East New Yorker

30

writer

teacher

Afrolatina

30

Afrovictim

COVID

age

30

Rana Zoe. You, East New York—I never knew.

He said, "She had a panic attack."

Denied

testing

twice.

Symptoms

denied.

Finally—

breathless—

hospitalization.

Denial.

He said, "She had a panic attack"?

They fight for Rana Zoe.

Connect

ventilator.

Contact

media.

Connect

race

gender

\$\$\$\$\$.

Connect

for Rana Zoe. They fight.

Such hope when she opened her eyes.  
Cried.  
Shed  
weeks'  
unconsciousness.  
Cried—  
students  
stories  
abandoned.  
Cried.  
Such hope, when she opened her eyes.

Rana Zoe died of COVID-19  
complications.  
Wrong  
Zip  
Code  
Complications.  
Black  
woman's  
body  
Complications  
of COVID-19... Rana Zoe died.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Rana Zoe Mungin, who had been clinging to life in the hospital for more than a month, died on Monday afternoon, April 27, 2020, after succumbing to COVID-19. She was a beloved 30-year-old middle school social studies teacher from Brooklyn who was twice turned away for testing before eventually being diagnosed with the virus.

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