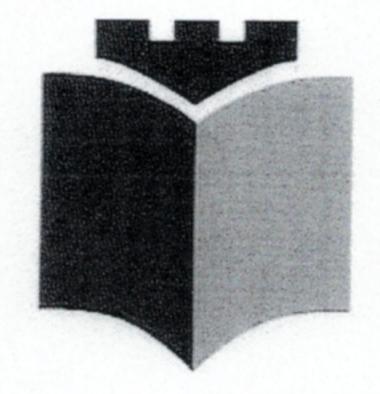
# WHERE WE STAND

Poems of Black Resilience

Introduction by ENZO SILON SURIN



### **American Predator**

1

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.

11.

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.

# WHERE WE STAND

## 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.3

<sup>&</sup>lt;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.

Copyright © 2022 by Cherry Castle Publishing, LLC. Columbia, Maryland 21045 www.cherrycastlepublishing.com All rights reserved. Published 2022 Printed in the United States of America LCCN: 2021944176 | ISBN: 978-1-9416-0410-6

Editors: Melanie Henderson, Enzo Silon Surin, Truth Thomas Copyeditor: Susan Thornton Hobby Cover art: "Blanket of Beliefs," Melanie Henderson, © 2022 Cover design and book layout: Enzo Silon Surin and Rachel Ross

#### Interior Photos:

- 1. "Watch for Black Lives" Melanie Henderson, © 2022
- 2. "The District Line" Melanie Henderson, © 2022
- 3. "Black Joy Matters" Melanie Henderson, © 2022
- 4. "The Breathing Fence" Melanie Henderson, © 2022