

## PUZZLE PIECE

mel g. campbell

I want June Jordan to be here.

I want Octavia Butler to be here.

I want Audre Lorde to be here.

I want my mothers, my mother to be here. My mommy.

[slide projector turning]

[squeaky door opening]

[footsteps across floor]

[door squeaking]

Still in the closet to my father, I contemplate bypassing the queer in me confessing, yes, dad, I am poor and I might always be. I'm sorry your first generation dreams for me won't come true. Thank you for the money you say proves your love, but I thought love was unconditional, and you have a book of rules.

[sounds of open air]

[birds chirp]

I want to come to you crisp, clean but you won't see the damage, don't believe this pain is for life.

[bus accelerating]

# Re·Vision

The Centre for Art and Social Justice

I think of L, who can't find a house to live in. Doors beckon from the tops of staircases, taunting, flaunting bay windows, big bedrooms, but no way to enter. These home dreams are real, but her wheels keep her locked out, because this city wasn't built for her.

Of A, who uses her finger to spell each letter. She waits with practiced patience for others to use their voices, to ignite her words against the fuckery of poverty, her daily battle for security.

Of R, who limps and slurs, is black and man, is profiled as a threat just walking down the street.

I think of how I can pass, if I leave my cane and the truth of my pain at home, if I lie about why I don't work full time, if I just stay alone when my brain crumbles under the strain of a lifetime of worn wounds.

My friend, the doctor, tells me she hates chronic pain patients. They're all just crazy, lazy, drug addicts. Why don't they help themselves? It's all in their head anyway.

I think of her, wonder if she's right. Try to count the times the men behind white coat clipboards told me I made it all up. When all of the neglect, wrong attention, body invasion, mind evaporation come calling at once and I crack.

Unevenly fragmented shards of glass-eyed stares, I pinch, slap, kick, scream to bring myself together. Consistent seismic shifts beneath my skin, displace my sandy makeup. Remembering my mommas, I stretch these broken joints, clogged with memory. Wipe away tears and scar tissue.