

Tongo Eisen-Martin  
**Three Poems**

e-flux journal #116 — march 2021 [Tongo Eisen-Martin](#)  
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### **the shape of state emblems**

Somewhere on the west coast, the third neighbor over doesn't care about Maroon history... and you've gone and forced his hand. This whole city started with an arranged strata matrimony. Middleclass-ness, if the sky were to belong in a poem. The seat next to me is a place of panic. Cops excitedly thinking, "boy, my rock-n-roll is going well." Riding human flesh through the city. Cars bouncing off of your best friends. A chattel-man consciousness bogged down; a death of white purpose mainly. Devil, you gonna show up here and do what? Show me how bad your feelings were hurt...

### **A Sketch about Genocide**

A San Francisco police chief says, "Yes, you poets make points. But they are all silly,"

Police chief sewing a mouth onto a mouth  
Police chief looking straight through the poet

Flesh market both sides of the levy  
Change of plans both sides of the nonviolence

On no earth  
Just an earth character

His subordinate says, "Awkward basketball moves look good on you, sir... Yes, we are everywhere, sir... yes, unfortunately for now, white people only have Black History ... we will slide the wallpaper right into their cereal bowls, sir ... Surveil the shuffle."

I am a beggar and all of this day is too easy  
I want to see all of the phases of a wall  
Every age it goes through  
    Its humanity  
    Its environmental racism

We call this the ordeal blues  
Now crawl to the piano seat and make a blanket for your cell  
Paint scenes of a child dancing up to the court appearance  
And leaving a man,  
    but not for home

Atlantic ocean charts mixed in with parole papers  
Mainstream funding (the ruling class's only pacifism)

Ruling class printing judges (fiat kangaroos)  
Making judges hand over fist  
Rapture cop packs and opposition whites all above a thorny stem  
Caste plans picked out like vans for the murder show  
anglo-saints addicting you to a power structure

you want me to raise a little slave, don't you?  
bash his little brain in  
and send him to your civil rights

No pain  
Just a white pain

Delicate bullets in a box next to a stack of monolith scriptures  
    (makes these bullets look relevant, don't it?)

I remember you  
Everywhere you lay your hat is the capital of the south  
The posture you introduced to that fence  
The fence you introduced to political theory

If you shred my dreams, son  
I will tack you to gun smoke

The suburbs are finally offended

this will be a meditation too

## I Imitate You

Picture, 1960s newspaper clippings and teeth hanging on a string--- *Like a book of life*

I'm in the kitchen with my would-be killer  
Picking their canines out of a mouth harp  
Cigarette-ing a pen  
Calling Black Fire to prayer

unscrewing the blue  
I am played down

The aim to only die for money once

mouth harp prepared:

*Ladies and gentlemen: we know what you all are not  
doing. Mainly you all are not leaving the universe to its  
childhood.*

A church signals another church with mirrors and nose-drips  
The spirit-world up and starts murdering city trees

Our psychic re-break  
sleeping-in-my-car Sunday chores  
allegory of new hard R's  
Or folk tale about a wolf's tongue in the cartons of cheap milk

Trace amounts of white sheet on a politician's teleprompter  
A glass case grows in Brooklyn  
Lower Ninth Ward houses play hop scotch and leap frog like white children  
while cops wave their bills at the world

The news cameras follow  
a teenager's descent into hell

I have grown up a little bit lately  
Almost becoming inanimate will do that for you

activist peril and new millennium jug music  
or the bottle you'd rather throw at your head than drink

no going to regular-people jail/no being hunted by regular-people cops"  
"Believe In the Street" is my first thought  
Is my parallel first name

A feat in spiritual equilibrium, I am waiting for God in front of a container factory

Put another way:  
Yawning after a night in jail feels like keeping busy  
Feels like imitating yourself severely  
a bar code no more  
nor new junkie's angst  
one step ahead of every plantation owner in your pocket

The Lord's blues  
I am eating every imagination in the room  
looking through Camden windows with perfect Zen concentration  
I understand the constitution and all the drugs it promised

Looking at shapes martyred by an imperialist state  
Jail barges on a grandmother's table  
couple poems away from your class suicide

"May the white citizens council steady your hand."  
artists ordered to embroider "Enemy of the people" onto millions of pillow cases.

Aiyana Jones sown into body temperatures  
A cue to cook Brooklyn

Children watching and identifying with people  
The man you made out of a face card  
The most uncooperative object in a cell

Police state only a few inches from your address

I talked to a class'less people today  
They were not essentially overworked nor military captains  
They were not wage-washed nor inbred in a Victorian series

Maybe I am the last white man on earth

All I dream is physical death  
Thinking about God/and God empty

In clumps of prison, my poem  
my cubist-remade scar  
my Saturn for adults  
my junkie industrialism

I knew my father as much as I want to be known

Originally from San Francisco, **Tongo Eisen-Martin** is a poet, movement worker, and educator. His latest curriculum on extrajudicial killing of Black people, *We Charge Genocide Again*, has been used as an educational and organizing tool throughout the country. His book titled, “Someone’s Dead Already” was nominated for a California Book Award. His latest book “Heaven Is All Goodbyes” was published by the City Lights Pocket Poets series, was shortlisted for the Griffins Poetry Prize and won a California Book Award and an American Book Award. His forthcoming book *Blood on the Fog* is being released this fall in the City Lights Pocket Poets series. He is San Francisco’s eighth poet laureate.

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