

Power by Audre Lorde

The difference between poetry and rhetoric is being ready to kill  
yourself  
instead of your children.

I am trapped on a desert of raw gunshot wounds and a dead child dragging his shattered black  
face off the edge of my sleep  
blood from his punctured cheeks and shoulders is the only liquid for miles

and my stomach  
churns at the imagined taste while  
my mouth splits into dry lips  
without loyalty or reason  
thirsting for the wetness of his blood  
as it sinks into the whiteness  
of the desert where I am lost  
without imagery or magic  
trying to make power out of hatred and destruction  
trying to heal my dying son with kisses  
only the sun will bleach his bones quicker.

A policeman who shot down a ten year old in Queens  
stood over the boy with his cop shoes in childish blood  
and a voice said "Die you little motherfucker" and  
there are tapes to prove it. At his trial  
this policeman said in his own defense  
"I didn't notice the size nor nothing else  
only the color". And  
there are tapes to prove that, too.

Today that 37 year old white man  
with 13 years of police forcing  
was set free  
by eleven white men who said they were satisfied  
justice had been done  
and one Black Woman who said  
"They convinced me" meaning  
they had dragged her 4'10" black Woman's frame  
over the hot coals  
of four centuries of white male approval  
until she let go  
the first real power she ever had  
and lined her own womb with cement  
to make a graveyard for our children.

I have not been able to touch the destruction  
within me.

But unless I learn to use  
the difference between poetry and rhetoric  
my power too will run corrupt as poisonous mold or  
lie limp and useless as an unconnected wire  
and one day I will take my teenaged plug  
and connect it to the nearest socket  
raping an 85 year old white woman  
who is somebody's mother  
and as I beat her senseless and set a torch to her bed  
a greek chorus will be singing in 3/4 time  
“Poor thing. She never hurt a soul. What beasts they are.”