

Learn to Sing

When they come for you, it will not be obvious. They will not dare shout when whispers suffice, when *you don't belong here*¹ will cut just as deep and cauterize, leave nothing unclean behind. If you dare raise your voice, show your hand, move above the sorrow like a sea² in which they force you to lay, you are labeled heretic before the words have time to echo. But do not be mistaken, my dear; this is not your place³ to keep. If they will not let you shout, sing. Your voice is as ancient as the world⁴ and you do not need volume to be heard. Find the right cavern and fill it with your melody. There are sermons in basements, and there is harmony in the darkest of corners. It will begin in the smallest of rooms and spread to churches, to boulevards and you and your single notes will not seem so quiet, will they? You will concophanize. You have grown deep like the rivers⁵ that carve through droughts and flood valleys, rushing at their heels and they will be the ones who show their hands. The hatred will sting, but bees are nothing against a thousand voices in song. They will be a rock cast in the sea⁶ and you will be a storm, so do not scream. You will be unstoppable if you learn to sing.

This cento includes lines from works from the following sources:

Footnotes 1+3 - "Ultimatum: Kid to Kid" by Langston Hughes

Footnote 2 - "Feet O' Jesus" by Florence Price

Footnote 4+5 - "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" by Langston Hughes

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