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## A Poem for Africans at Hastings Law School

Lisa B. Thompson

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*a poem for africans at hastings law school\**

*by Lisa B. Thompson*

this is a poem for africans at hastings law school who  
endure, involve, evolve, resolve struggle after struggle  
is this what its all about?  
i am writing a poem about them three years  
of law school at hastings for dion, kamala, valerie, clemont, charles,  
veronica, dianne, sibby, patrick, sharon, rickey...and those fifteen  
disqualified by intellectual apartheid  
re-admits, repeats, re-examining, restructuring reality  
but this is for the ten walking...  
who cannot forget as the california bar looms ahead  
to behead...how many will pass?  
C = JD, C = JD, C = JD  
for law school is only the middle passage  
there are those who jumped ship to swim back home  
or who drowned in the cruel waters of exams, outlines,  
performance anxiety, and financial sobriety  
only to surface later in life as another  
u c hastings law school statistic.

“its so HARD here!”  
the echo of so many voices  
on the elevator heading down from the towers landing  
into the filth of the tenderloin scattered with bodies without homes  
passing them each day on the way from bart  
whispers of their pain, “i will work for food...”  
men: young weary wasted; lost: time energy hope

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\* The author composed and performed this piece for the 1989 Hastings College of the Law African Peoples Graduation Celebration.

Lisa B. Thompson, a native San Franciscan, is a poet and playwright living in Southern California while completing a Masters of the Arts in Afro-American Studies at UCLA. Her current projects include researching slavery in recent Afro-American fiction and writing a play examining the relationships between the sexes.

“yo! homeboy you gotta dime so i kin getta cup a coffee?”  
as you pass him on the way to con law to insure your place  
in the black bourgeoisie you must ignore the fact  
this homeless brotha reminds you of uncle louis from texas instead  
you shuffle in empty pockets retrieving the quarter  
allotted for your daily cup.  
you mutter something about “get a job man”  
knowing your quarter likely helps pay for another type of anaesthetic  
its hard to walk with blinders in a city littered with bodies  
there never is an excuse for time  
no time for family tragedy, no time for lover's whim,  
no time  
another case to prepare, another brief to write, another outline  
always another outline  
C = JD, C = JD, C = JD...

this is a poem for those africans who do not know  
they are african having already begun to believe the lies  
“you are an american first, a woman, a man, a human being”  
“all you have to do is perform,” excel, exceed  
the limits of normal human capacity  
wear an “s” on your chest  
posing for the cover of california lawyer  
in blue tights, red trunks with a briefcase in hand  
“super negro”  
pleased to assist in all forms of litigation  
public interest  
privately owned  
crowded in by the  
approving glances of the charles houston bar and the wiley foundation's  
eyes.  
C = JD, C = JD, C = JD...

a poem for africans at hastings who  
marching again to protest  
and the truth is they detest

your unrest  
after all the sixties are gone, finished, spent  
the black struggle irrelevant but you know  
this war never ends

not until african first year students come through hastings' doors  
no longer facing racist exams  
no longer confronted by belligerent flyers defacing walls  
preaching ignorance and hate  
no longer forced to count the number of african male students on one  
hand  
no longer sitting isolated in classes of two hundred where  
they are the "only one"  
who knows about the real public enemy  
it should take more than a nation of millions to hold us back  
from disposing of institutional racism, sexism, classism, fascism and  
recalling our chant  
C =JD, C = JD, C = JD.  
it will no longer be so damn relevant.

this is a poem for ten beautiful africans  
who conquered insane tasks without losing sanity  
who juggled memory, fear, pain, love, passion, with energy beyond  
days  
who maintained by borrowing strength from God, the ancestors, their  
families and through internal struggle even from each other's tears &  
smiles  
who now provide a rich and lasting impression  
they represent a positive chapter of our people's rich history  
praise to the young folk who found wisdom enough to get this far  
remember to protect those who adore you  
from the wicked world that tried intensely to keep this day  
from you, from us  
this is the first annual hastings law school  
african student's graduation celebration  
it's nice to write an ending to a sobering happy story

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the middle passage is over  
it's time to get off the ship

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