

*in times like these*

I am expected to be captain kirk  
giving orders to my bridge crew of white friends on instagram  
hailing me with dm's of, "what can I do?"

and I try to be the teacher they want me to be  
but lately all I can do  
is think really hard  
about things I don't normally give thought to  
like  
skincare  
and milk substitutes  
and 3:30pm  
and lots of plants.

in my shower—  
my face wash is in a yellow bottle  
you flip open the cap and squeeze the white cream onto your palm  
close your eyes and tilt to your head back to let the water dance on your face  
then rub gently into your skin  
cleanse clogged pores, soothe imperfections only you notice,  
and silently wish you could do the same to your country  
wash away the hate of america with the suds of your open palm  
smile as fear slides its way down the drain  
pray that nothing clogs it  
like tar clogs my lungs when there is another hashtag.

when drinking oat milk—  
that was \$3 more than it should've been  
that makes coffee taste better and tummies hurt less than cows  
and that I also, quietly, hope will help me lose weight  
but as I watch my worth be measured in mirrors  
I wonder if my waistband is an act of resistance  
to live above a bmi meant for people of a different race than me,  
meant to shame and hurt and oppress the people of any race than white,  
is to have revolution live in my tongue and in my hips  
if I continue to pick and poke and watch them shrink  
is that another Black death I will mourn in private?

in the afternoon—

I get in a fight with my brother  
and tell him I don't want to see him anymore  
because I'm scared of what will happen if he leaves the house.

there are lots of little things I think about  
in times like these  
and I want you to think about  
their names, their lives,  
how we use ours to honor and fight for theirs  
but I also want you to think about  
plants  
flowers, trees,  
in your front yard garden,  
outside of home depot,  
in loving memory,  
laid down at gravesites and protests  
planted and watered and loved  
by hands  
of all colors  
hands  
that resisted death  
but not arrest.

too many people couldn't breathe,  
and the plants that grow  
from their return to the earth  
make it easier  
for us all  
to breathe

-jordan marie finley