

John White¹ Defends

Poem by Lauren K. Alleyne
New York, USA

¹ John White is an African American convicted for the shooting of a young white teenager who went to White's Long Island home at 2 a.m., drunk and armed with a baseball bat. The teen claimed that he and his posse were there to 'take care of' White's son, Aaron, because of a rumor that Aaron had made sexual comments about his girlfriend on MySpace.

John White Defends

i.

They came
in the dead of night
with their ghost skin and war cries
their tongues sharpened with hate

nigger this, nigger that

They came
as always they have come and come
again my worse nightmare sprung
alive—they were here
for my son

ii.

the fancy house
the two car garage
the low trimmed lawn
the petunias and peonies
the tomatoes and summer herbs
my name in fancy letters on the mailbox

—I should have known
there would be a reckoning

iii.

I said, *please* then
I said *stop* then
I said *no*

iv.

I wanted
to spare him the burning
crosses
the dangerous
brotherhoods
the needle
the bullet
the shackles
the whip of a merciless law
I wanted to spare him
this