

A. T. MCWILLIAMS

GROW HERE TOO
for Emmett Till

sung without a tremor in his throat,
the news man counted our tears in
torrents. 10 THOUSAND WEEP
WITH TILL'S MOTHER—enough
rain to raise the tide beneath their
ships, but not wash away their
sins, or protect our grandmothers'
grandmothers from gasping against
the ocean's fold. but what difference
could a deep breath make? those
who did not jump still learned to drown.
and after all, they tossed him into the
Tallahatchie for living out loud—a boy
happy and black and killed but most
of all just a boy. they said he whistled
like a wolf. they said he had it coming.
they said his body broke like the waves
against their ships. they said she can
still taste the lie on her tongue. she said
it was sweet at first, but then it soured
beneath the Mississippi sun—reddening
with the day and poking through the
church's stained glass. there, the boy
looked like a king in his casket. and when
the land remembered his name (verb;
to sow crops) he grew gilded roots,
stretching beneath our feet, pushing
our heels towards the sky as if to say
you can grow here too.

A.T. MCWILLIAMS is a race, culture and politics writer living in San Francisco, California. A.T.'s essays have appeared in the New Yorker, the Guardian, Slate, Complex, The Huffington Post, Quartz and more. His poems have (or will soon) appear in Prelude Magazine, Main Street Mag, Radius Literary Magazine, Storyscape Journal, Blunderbuss Magazine, Juked Journal, Gravel Magazine, Mobius Magazine, Rogue Agent Journal, and elsewhere. In 2016, A.T. received a nomination for the national Pushcart Prize for poetry. He can be found on the web: atmcwilliams.com.