

NKOSI NKULULEKO

83 South Pier

...In other news, buoys go missing
beneath boat docks and floating plastics.

I cycled here for the view, remembering
Bass, Salmon, Trout, beneath; the big catch
folks post photos of
on the 'gram. Shore's vintage with red-
eyed fish and black wounds
bobbing in green-tinted water...

Police arrive. Their puncturing surveillance
net all my limbs.

Below, my reflections / sprawled, the river
intimate with parts of my body I regret /
leaving anxieties inside of—

Like, why do parents teach history linking
our age with another who's died?

Emmett. Emmett. Emmett.

Emmett. Emmett.

My name hoard names like worms in a tackle box.

—cops at the pier with masks half off
wear sunglasses, dark figures walking in
their frames
wanting / out.

I can't tell you anything
you don't already know about
the boy / the woman
mistook for a hat or a whistle, perhaps,
that / dolphins make, untapped
neurology intolerable of music.

The woman dressed
that vermilion evening in scales
of fish, judgement swimming in the fold
of her silence.
Everywhere is the South.

I cast my gaze from the docks—
“move along”— to the cop's eyes

EMMETT TILL PROJECT

behind his shades, heavy
as some unredeemable weight born
in the logic of folks so spoiled

with *tradition* they look over-bored
when killin' a nigga.

NKOSI NKULULEKO, Poets House and Saltonstall Foundation of the Arts Fellow, is winner of Michigan Quarterly Review's Page Davidson Clayton Prize for Emerging Poets 2018, is published in places such as Callaloo, The Adroit Journal, The Offing, Ploughshares, and is anthologized in The Bettering American, The Best American Poetry 2018 and Furious Flower: Seeding the Future of African American Poetry.