

**A Cento for what we're building**

My life is Black and filled with fortune  
My name makes you want to tell me the truth  
My simple and daily and nightly self-determination  
stretches the skin on my palm  
And who will join this standing up  
to bear the pleasures  
But you, me, and tomorrow  
made road maps for infant joy  
I call out, hoping she can hear me

## **Breaking Curses**

gift you scissors to cut  
stab if necessary  
snakes with the same name as you

gift you permission to hate  
the hand that held yours as you crossed  
the street  
the same hand that shut the door on you so many times

gift you chocolate hands  
and nappy hair  
failing every test passed down from East Texas plantations  
Master's Bastards

gift you recipes and handkerchiefs and pocket books and nail polish  
gift you girly

gift you a Sunday away from church  
this kitchen will grant enough prayers

gift you playtime  
hiccupping laughter  
caramel-colored cherubs

gift you bedtime stories turned  
modern mantras  
gift you enough

## **The Spring That You Aged**

Diabetes and Arthritis  
seemed reserved  
for grandparents  
Mine  
You are not grandparents  
But you are all mine  
Diabetes and Arthritis  
Be the first thing you think of in the morning  
Be your first love  
first breath  
Be your breakfast in bed  
Keeps you safe  
Keeps you comfortable  
Keeps you in the dark  
curtains drawn  
Diabetes and Arthritis  
Be inherited  
Be Black  
Be birthright  
not right  
You were always spry  
First on the dancefloor  
Last at happy hour  
Are you happy  
with your new cocktails  
Prescriptions from doctors  
who say take it easy  
You've never known easy  
Never known a doctor you could trust  
Wanted me to be a doctor  
Want to trust  
that I'll be safe  
Put me in your Living Trust  
Trust your living  
And your day-to-day  
Trust you're okay  
You both say