



THE LAST WORD

HENRY 7. RENEAU JR.

Scrub &
haul &
fetch &
tote.

Black folks do what white folks won't.
Is insidious

[Historically] even in moments of the mundane.
It wields coercion & deceives

with fork-tongued ambiguities, is racism,
depending on where we stand within the margins.

Is the inevitability of our mental entrapment, arisen
from the psychic churn of epigenetics,

the changes in gene expression
brought on by the violence of inherited trauma,

can be terrifying to confront, but if ignored,
one runs the risk of becoming entangled in the past

[shackled & chained] like blackness,
generationally bitch-slapped by Katrina's detonation.

In how many moments have we suspended our instincts
to insist that They mean no harm (even when They harm)?

We hold our tongues. Is a suspension
of disbelief. Is an ongoing act of pushing past

frustration & disappointment & imminent death
to get to laughter, empathy & the spiritual worth of our souls.

Scrub &
haul &

fetch &
tote.

Our invisible labor made visible. Amerikkka is the result
of that labor. Is the last word. [Period.]



The Last Word, Anika Roach, (still)

henry 7. reneau, jr. writes words of conflagration to awaken the world ablaze, an inferno of free verse illuminated by his affinity for disobedience—is the spontaneous combustion that blazes from his heart, phoenix-fluxed red & gold, like a discharged bullet that commits a felony every day, exploding through change is gonna come to implement the fire next time. He is the author of the poetry collection, *freedomland blues* (Transcendent Zero Press) and the e-chapbook, *physiography of the fittest* (Kind of a Hurricane Press), now available from their respective publishers. Additionally, his collection, *A Non-Violent Suicide Poem* [or, *The Saga of The Exit Wound*], was a finalist for the 2022 Digging Press Chapbook Series. His work is published in *Superstition Review*, *TriQuarterly*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Zone 3*, *Poets Reading the News* and *Rigorous*. His work has also been nominated multiple times for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net.

Anika Roach, born and raised in London, United Kingdom, is an artist whose current practice is centered around painting and moving images. Her work seeks to broaden existing narratives surrounding the painting of black people, offering alternative narratives in order to challenge the social and political weight which often negates the uniqueness of the black experience. The work is informed by sport history, politics, and a diverse range of media from classical art and popular culture. It endeavors to undermine and confuse established, pre-configured social norms.

Anika Roach was shortlisted for the 2019 Woon Foundation Prize hosted by BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art and was included in the Bloomberg New Contemporaries show at South London Gallery in 2020. She holds a Foundation Diploma in Art and Design from the Camberwell College of Arts and studied Fine Art and the History of Art at Goldsmiths University in London, where she continues to work and live.

The artwork shown here is a still of the full work shown at *Stillpoint Magazine*.

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