

## black awareness

every saturday  
I go to the *centre*  
enter a circle  
hear stories  
play with colours  
and without *threat*  
sing dancing  
opening myself  
with care  
to read  
and recognize  
my *stories*

and at sunset  
right there  
I pick up a pencil  
which does not judge me  
or cut me  
or fell  
my calm  
and I invent  
without fear  
the first comic-book  
with afro-amazonian  
*pages of life*

1. barracão is understood as wooden 'lean-to' but this is a stable center made from cement and wood
2. literally, the 'whip', but here 'pressure' or 'threat'
3. 'stories', which in portuguese also means 'histories'
4. 'pages of life' (folhas da vida), the name of our youth-run community library

## Energies of life

I create a kite  
and see your care, mother  
in my hands  
cutting and sowing  
my clothes.

I tie the ribbons of its tail  
and your wisdom, father  
in the dance of your fingers  
weaving nets  
in the shade of the square.

I fly my dreams  
their string vibrating  
with so much history and desire  
and though mute  
failed and condemned  
I read the future in the winds  
and write  
the ethics of the rivers  
in the parched red sky  
to unveil  
the values of the giants  
and keep safe  
my life in my home.

1. 'square' is literally 'little plaza'
2. 'mute' is literally 'silenced'
3. 'failed' is literally 'academically 'disapproved' and kept down a year.
4. 'unveil' literally means to 'reveals the lies'
5. 'My Home, My Life' is the government program that breaks up family ties and communities, creating concentrated zones of cheap industrialized housing for the poorest, thrown together into new 'estates' without health centres, schools, parks or options outline the informal and illegal economies.

## let our river pass

even though there are no more fish  
I will hold on to my grandpa's canoe  
its *taúba* benches preserve  
the curve of my learning in his lap  
of how to read the rivers  
the smell of *tucunaré*  
drying on the clothes-line in our backyard  
and of mum's peels of laughter  
discovering my first love of summer

that world sustains the roots  
of my hope  
that the assassination of *sources*  
in the name of green progress  
will open your *nut-brown* eyes  
encourage you to pick-up the *propellor*  
and cross the tocontins, again  
at sunset, with me  
to defend our amazon

1. **taúba** is the toughest amazonian wood
2. **tucunaré** is an amazonian fish now threatened with extinction
3. in the portuguese, **nascentes** is understood as life-sources of the river
4. 'nut-brown' in the portuguese also carries the meaning of the **castanha** tree ('brazil nut') from the amazonian region. All of these forests have now been felled.
5. propellor (an outboard, simple motorized propellor).