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Ancestry

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I can not trace my ancestry on ancestry.com.
It is not in birth certificates or those little green leaves.
Chosen families are not recognized by the government,
Cause queerness isn't passed down at conception.
It is passed down through shadows.

The shadows of a room all alone,
No one to hold them during that final breath,
Hoping their next life will be better than this one.
My ancestors have ended their lives early at alarming
rates,
Inside coffins they lay, embraced by shadows.

Shadows dancing throughout history,
Hidden lives,
Hidden lovers,
Forgotten.
Their truth censored post-mortem.

From Bayard Rustin,
Who organized the March on Washington,
But was considered a liability to the Civil Rights Move-
ment,
Forced to work in the shadows,
Too gay to be seen.

To Lili Elbe,
The real Danish Girl,
A transwoman born in the 1880s,
Her wife's Mona Lisa,
Died in 1931 attempting to get a uterus.

To Wilmer Broadnax,
A powerful gospel singer,
Known as Little Axe,
A trans-man outed to the world in death.

All either too queer to be remembered,
Or their queerness erased,
Pages of history books burned before we could read them,
Left with specks of ash.

Ash and dust swept away during morning duties.
A busy schedule from sun up to sun down,
There was neither time to ask nor tell.
Commander in Chief rejecting brave citizens,
Based on genitalia and gender.
Persecuted by a country they proudly serve.
Forced into the closet,
A brave few emerging,
Filled with relief and fear.

A mixture of relief and fear because coming out is too of-
ten a gamble.
Determining the probability of not having a home the next
morning,
Calculating the odds they will be sent to conversion thera-
py,
Where Monday and Thursday after lunch,
Electroshock is part of the routine.
This hate is not new.
And neither is this fear.

Fear of the fate my ancestors met.
Fear of the fire.
Fear of the stake.
My ancestors were hunted and murdered with witches.
Burning below the witch,
Because they were not worthy enough to be burned at the
stake,
Lying with the bundles of sticks,
Lying with the bundles of sticks,
The kindling that would be the first to ignite.
A reminder that my ancestry is rooted in ash.

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