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*Coastlines*

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**I asked that they let me be great**  
(A rap by Joma Shelby)

I'm scratching my way to love  
in this world filled with hate;  
Friends lost to the struggle;  
Orphaned child born through the hustle;  
No whip marks, no brands of enslavement, we're free;  
But my people treat me as if it was me  
that hung our ancestors from the trees;  
Let me weep, why should I hold back tears of pain;  
My heart hurts from the unity my people fail to gain;  
We'd rather slang drugs and gang bang;  
And we're content with barely enough and just trying to  
maintain;  
They say light one up and that'll solve the problem;  
But when it burns out, I find that there's still no solution to  
this solvent;  
I don't want to dilute it, I want to dissolve it;  
Who put these thoughts of guns in my siblings' heads and  
told them the answer is to revolve it;  
Six answers in the chamber and the seventh is to rest;  
Our head on a cot and engrave tribal marks on our chest;  
It seems the chain gang receives more praise than the  
weighted brain;  
Of a genius that spends his time engaged in a book to gain  
wisdom of the unexplained;  
I asked that you let me be great,  
but if my greatness is validated through dummy rap;  
Or my ability to spit spoken word that don't make you think,  
but instead just snap,  
then I'll pass on all of that;  
I'm trying to take guns out my siblings' heads and place  
peace in their hearts;  
I understand the fight for scraps and a little break from the  
dark;  
Can motivate you to pick up the heater and make a spark;

Just to receive a little milk and honey to a throat that's  
parched.  
I understand how fighting for your life seems right;  
Until you're blinded by the light and lose sight of what's right  
And wrong, and your home becomes a cage harboring  
jailbird songs;  
I know what it feels like to have potential corked;  
And what it's like to long to be spooned but you get forked;  
Because you've been labeled a nerd, know-it-all, or a dork;  
I asked that you let me be great, but let me alter the  
proposition;  
I'm really asking for no opposition, and I believe that your  
assistance in this composition would be a wise decision.  
I'm just trying to teach our children that there's more to  
living than just existing and becoming a stereotype and a  
part of the system