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I AM 'THEM' AND 'THEM'

Faith Bishop

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I AM 'THEM' and 'THEM' (while studying American history on a afternoon)

I am 'them,'

invisible now in your indivisible union.

I wore the chains of slavery,
took the watery passage for bravery,
and tore lost and bloody victories
from your tyrant lies.

Betrayed, kidnapped, sold and sold again in
a far away land

Three-fifths of a man.

When my freedom came it was a ragtag mockery
dressed in hand-me-down poverty,
with no place to go in the land of opportunity.
Cry?

There were no tears left in my eyes.

I am also 'them.'

I fell before your bullets,
projected from your pulpits
of manifest destiny and blood-soaked
demise.

I am them who yet tell the secrets of your
broken lies.

At the hands of greed and your excuse for
fear,

I am them who death-walked Missouri's Trail
of Tears.

I lived the horror of a pawn's repeated mischance,
and soothed hysteria with one last ghost dance
at Wounded Knee.

Wovoka Christ spoke to me
of a new heaven and a new earth, of
victory!

Or was it just one last beneficent dream for His
dying people?

All of us swept away,
wept away
kept away
from freedom's skies.

I am them and them:
The Native and The African.

Faith Bishop

