

Sights and Sounds of the Ghetto

Eerie sights fill my gaze/
I look upon bodies that are battered and weary/
Faces painted with pensive, solemn expression/
Pulsating temples and tightened jaw bones/
Eyes darting about in all directions, engaged in survival mode/
I look upon tensed shoulders and perched arms, crossed defensively/
The walking dead tirelessly searching for their per diem fixations/
I look upon groups of individuals muddled together in rife proximity, bonded by generations of penury/

I hear the sounds of horror which indelibly resonate/
I look upon scores of youth, and even though their sobs and wailing may be silent, and their cries out for help may be inaudible, the noise is deafening/
I hear the scuffling of sneakered footsteps against the concrete pavement/ The blaring of lights and sirens/ And the laboring of breathing as perpetrators fleetingly escape authoritative pursuit/
I hear the cries and whimpering of infants being held on the hips of adolescents, who have been maternally forced into adulthood/

I look upon the ghetto infrastructure, with its family dwellings stripped down, blackened charred, and presumed vacant/
Squatters making due with second-hand furniture and pirated utilities/
Under appliances and in corners sit mouse traps, fly strips, and roach motels/
I look upon lurid, hulking eyesores rotting away, standing on their last leg/
Employment severally abated, so bill-collectors and landlords subsequently become persona non grata/
I look upon busloads of schoolchildren being driven toward dreams thought to be unattainable/

I hear the squeaks and croaks of rocking chairs as elders gather and squabble over matters of vanity/
I gaze upon games of hop-scotch and double-dutch being played on the same ghetto sidewalks where hustlers shoot craps/
School children walking the same streets where the 'working girls' stroll/
I hear the resounding celebrations of those who've for so long hidden their true identity for fear of enmity from the masses, but now released themselves from the crypts of their own hearts and minds/

Sights and sounds of the ghetto/

—Dawud Wilson