

Where I'm From

by *Renée Watson*

I'm made up of East Coast hip-hop and island tradition.

I'm from Baptist hymns and secular jigs.
Tambourine playin', late night stayin'
at the church house, or my friend's house, or their
friend's house
(on the weekends).

Where I'm from there are corduroyed hand-me-downs
and family keepsakes.
Family pictures on the wall. Open Bible on the coffee
table.

I'm from *that* side of town.
Where the media only comes for bloodshed. Blood
wasted.
Never for blood restored, celebrated, or regenerated.

I'm from hopscotch and double Dutch.
Hide-n-go seek and Pac-Man.

I'm from curry goat, rice and peas and beef patties.
From turquoise blue water, white sand, and
dreadlocks.
Reggae is in my blood.

Grew up in the Pacific Northwest. A place where rain
falls
more than sun shines.
I'm from Douglas firs and pine trees,
where we walk under waterfalls,
drive up windy roads to Mt. Hood,
and escape to the beaches on the Oregon coast.

Where I'm from music takes away the blues.
I'm from Bob Marley. Mahalia Jackson. Aretha
Franklin. James Brown.
I'm from Jackson 5 records and New Edition tapes.
I'm from rewinding tapes over and over and over
again
so you can write down the lyrics and memorize them.

Where I'm from the whole neighborhood is your family
ladies sit on their porches looking out for you
shooing away boys like flies.

Callin' your momma to tell what you did
before you can get home and lie about it.

Where I'm from people ask my friend,
"Is that your hair?" and she says, "Yeah it's mine.
I bought it!"

I'm from divorce being passed down to children like
a family heirloom.
I'm from single mommas pushing strollers,
praying that their babies don't make the same
mistakes as them.

I'm from a little goes a long way, from sun gonna
shine after the rain.
I'm from persevering souls and hardworking hands.
From a people destined to make it to their
promised land.
I'm from been there, done that, can and will do it
again.
Now you, tell me—where you from?

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