



*Photo credit: Alessandra Capodacqua*

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this year: our tempers, the climate, the fear  
my student wears who wants to go home  
to Afghanistan, but can't. There's the pang of pain  
in my chest when I try to breathe. Call it the heart  
choking, or the invisible weight of uncertainty.  
But let's end the night with this: there are children  
playing baseball and though the drone of NPR hosts

discussing drones chatter in the background

like white noise, I barely hear it. I watch one child  
hit a double, watch dirt rise as he slides,  
watch the simplicity of being close to safe  
as the thwack of a ball suction to leather.

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### What the Bones Say

What we touch we don't feel.  
Our language, a series of single notes, crack  
a different rhythm each time.  
Never the same song twice. Never  
a bone with a twin voice. Believer  
of muscle and strength, we may not live  
like organs pulsing, but we structure  
your shadow, break without bend.  
When no one carries  
your history, we will.

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### America, 2017

We ache. We argue against the TV and our thoughts  
flatten against the screen. We break a dish  
in the sink and bleed cleaning it up. We cry  
and crawl through crud. We drag and devour our fate

like a feast. We eat leftovers for breakfast,  
evaluate life in therapy. We fumble joy  
  
mid-protest, mid-fear. We gamble morals  
for morsels. We grasp the grit. We halt,  
  
then humbly ignite. We incite. We jump rope  
and recall childhood songs. We jam  
  
our dreams, knit our knots, but still knock  
on a neighbor's door. We live, long, and mourn.  
  
We mumble our speech. We negate. We negotiate  
the curve on our bikes. We organize and open  
  
yesterday's mail. We pray, and plummet  
in pain. We quiz ourselves until we quit. We read,  
  
then rumble our voices louder than Trump's tweets.  
We stumble and the sun still sets, still rises. We stretch  
  
and topple the takeaway, then unravel.  
We uproot what we didn't know was rooted.  
  
We vote and vent with friends. We wait.  
We would do more, but how? We x-ray bodies  
  
to find the break's location and mold a cast.  
We yell and yearn and zip children's coats  
  
to keep out the cold. We zoom through  
an alphabetical list without noticing  
  
our breath that holds us here  
in this chair, without noticing  
  
how small we are  
and how small we aren't.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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## Nicole Robinson

Nicole Robinson's recent poems have appeared in *Artful Dodge*, *Great River Review*, *Pittsburgh Poetry Review*, *Tahoma Literary Review*, and elsewhere. She lives in Ohio and is a writer-in-residence at Akron Children's Hospital where she leads creative writing workshops for patients, families, and staff.