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ODE TO THE BLACK, SWEATY HOUSE PARTY

ARRIEL VINSON



where perspiration turns each partier
to a God, water-walkin',
water-dancin' like Aaliyah.
Ode to the sweat that drips
from exposed brown backs
onto jeans that rub
white walls blue,
make a sky of them.

Ode to the twerkin'.
The way black people move
their hips, bend their knees,
and let their heft quiver
freely in places so thick
with bodies, hot as summer
car rides without AC,



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by shouted cuss words
 with pointer fingers and thumbs extended. Ode to the guys who hold
 walls or each other
 when Chief Keef comes on,
 brown arms draped over drenched
 necks, jumping so hard the floor
 dips like a valley from the weight of kinship.

Oh, when black folks create church
 out of soaked celebration,
 we ritual. 'Cause a black, sweaty
 house party anywhere is a black,
 sweaty house party everywhere.
 So, ode to the same ol' shit:
 turning up the speakers
 so loud they rupture,
 running out of jungle juice
 thirty minutes in,
 kicking out those who fought
 and starting over again.

Our own kind of hot-as-hell,
 beautiful, brown home.

Arriel Vinson is a Tin House Winter Workshop alum and Indiana native who writes about being young, black, and in search of freedom. She is an MFA Fiction candidate at Sarah Lawrence College and received a B.A. in Journalism from Indiana University. Her poetry, fiction, and essays have appeared in Waxwing, [PANK] Magazine, HeART Journal Online, LUMINA Journal, Lunch Ticket, and Electric Lit. She is currently the 2018-19 McCrindle Foundation Fellow at Poets & Writers.
