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Special Edition:
The prison crisis

Scatter when they come

Kelly Roberts is an artist and guest performer at Safe Ground's A Matter of Life and Death event, September 2018

Stop! Don't Run
Succumb to the power
Of state
Patrolling the slum walls
Seeking out those
Destined for a slippery slope
Mischief trip fall
Into the tight grip
Of incarceration.
Dragged along bars to harden
Then Infected with the incriminating poison.

Decaying bouquets and candle wax cease into
Kingsland concrete.
Chocolate loiterers congregate outside corner
shops like vultures
Finding refuge on the sides of pavements
Intimidating pedestrians with words unspoken.

I used to know a girl
Displaced in the tower block maze
Brown with curls
She wore gold in her teeth
Skin thick and seasoned like meat
Smoking cigarettes in stairs wells
Littering the estate with the butts
Of her broken dreams

In the hood she would chill
With the mandem posted up on the block
In the manor
The Siren would sound
A Warning shot!
Blues lights flicker in sight
Scatter when they come
Run, Fled!
I C fed!

I see 1 male
Taken to reprimand a brother
Then another, then another
I see them ambush

A father, a son, a human being
But he was vex and must of resisted arrest
Slammed into the floor
Face plastered to the ground
His teeth crushed against tiles dirt cold
Don't move or make a sound
He wouldn't want to be
Sent down town in a body bag
Don't breathe, it might be his last breath
Respect the authority
Or he could be tackled with brunt violence
Finding a knee press up against his chest

Pressure tugging tight at the neck
It's porta —call
This is how they serve to protect
And keep us in check
With no accountability

Mothers of the minority
Bleed tsunami tears
From the bearing of their womb
Lying lifeless above scarlet pools
Washing away the trauma
From a world desensitised
To sight of Black Death

The Brown girl's eyes raged red
She cried!
Another black body dead
He died after
Being racially profiled
And Justice was never London met
Death his penalty
Another black body
Made victim of police brutality
Excessive and unnecessary
Force is used 139 times a day in London
Stopped and search 4 times more
Likely to be a suspect
Of carrying a sharp object
Genetics target capsized by life
Then locked up in the pen
Because society never accounted for them.

The brown girl would never committed a crime
But still feared doing the time
As stigma lives on the surface her skin
Even when innocent she could be taken in
Sat at the back of a cop car
Coz nothing aint changed star!
The prejudice is still alive
And it thrives in the prison system
Penalising a generating
Suffocating at the wrists by
Silver bracelets that only shine
Behind their backs.
The brown girl is left with silent screams
Spending the day with her 5 year old niece
Siren sounds
It's the police
Her niece sinks into her arms
And repeats 'I'm scared of the police'
She then knew the fear ran deep.

Does a 5 year old white child have the same fear of
the police growing up on London streets?