



## This Shame Called Joy

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AMY UYEMATSU

—for *Thyllias Moss*

Hand squeezed,  
thick with a pulp which clings  
to this cup as I tilt it  
slowly toward my mouth,  
savoring the flesh, sweet  
skin against skin—  
orange juice.

But I need more assurance  
for such small, deliberate joys.  
I can't stop seeing  
the tape of young Latasha Harlins  
being shot in the back over a \$1.79  
carton of orange juice.  
The grocer who kills Latasha  
doesn't go to jail and I  
can't convince anyone of the crime.  
Or of my own outrage.

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AMY UYEMATSU aka AMY TACHIKI, editor of *Roots: An Asian American Reader* (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 1971) published her first book of poetry, *30 Miles from J-Town* (Brownsville, Oregon: Storyline Press, 1992) as the winner of the 1992 Nicholas Roerich Poetry Prize.

My senses grow darker each day.  
This lust I cultivate for the ordinary,  
the juice of an orange tasting more exquisite  
than I ever remember,  
cannot be separated from the brutal  
death of a child who only wanted  
to drink from the same fruit.

I need to acknowledge  
my longing and hold joy on my tongue,  
this desperate, glorious hunger  
to take the whole world in—  
even in its meanness—  
for whatever it's willing to give.  
Let me be grateful for  
the tenacity of my desire.