

**CHOKWE**  
*(August 2, 1947 – February 25, 2014)*

Chokwe,  
hunters who trapped slave catchers  
in the nets of trees  
live in the law books of the gifted  
not in what is said  
but what is left unsaid  
between the lyrics of Kalunga's freedom song

you,  
seer of heaven's law  
master of speech and nommo  
snaking a circuitous path of mystery  
before the gods gaping mouths of awe

how you break iron bars with combat breath?  
how you make caged birds fly fearless  
above the gun towers shooting blanks?  
how you trap slave traders in trees  
where you harbored your lion heart  
earned your honorary spear of sacrifice  
and saved the village

the River Congo flows clear as stars  
purged of the blood of millions  
purged of the minefields of decapitated hands and feet  
bartered for rubber  
drowning the senseless rape weapons of war

the river flows  
and the lion steps forth onto the banks  
wearing the Chikunga mask of royalty  
poised with immanent power  
you, King of the rainforest  
no longer a jungle of pejoratives  
your wise haired mane  
holding the secrets of the Sphinx  
holding the scepter of the lawgiver  
in your black power fist  
you, word spinner of honey and ice  
judge of the hanging judge  
daring the mud and water of the Mississippi

to mate, to procreate  
to free the land of cash crop pestilence  
to cultivate the lotus

cuz you knew the law of heaven  
was the natural law of man  
and you had a hand in bringing it home  
when it wasn't no home  
in the injustice system  
trapped in the nets of trees  
the sellers of flesh  
freeze in fright  
at the lion's gaze  
fatal as a philosopher stone's transmutation  
    of evil to good  
    of ignorance to enlightenment  
beaming through courtroom windows  
giving divinity to law  
like the alchemist of Chikunga  
a red river runs blue  
lead is gold  
and gold is led away to rest  
undisturbed under the cocopalm  
the village is saved,  
Chokwe,  
the village is saved

you have earned your spear of sacrifice  
you have earned your place  
among the mighty Malcolm, Martin and Marcus  
among the procession of holy heroes  
in the ever affirming stars.

Nubia Kai