PLAYGROUND ELEGY

**Clint Smith**

The first time I slid down a slide my mother

told me to hold my hands in towards the sky

something about gravity, weight distribution,

& feeling the air ripple through your fingers.

I remember reaching the bottom, smile consuming

half of my face, hands still in the air because

I didn’t want it to stop. Ever since, this defiance

of gravity has always been synonymous with feeling alive.

When I read of the new child, his body strewn across

the street, a casket of bones and concrete I wonder how

many times he slid down the slide. How many times

he defied gravity to answer a question in class. Did he

raise his hands for all of them? Does my mother regret

this. That she raised a black boy growing up to think

that raised hands made me feel more alive. That raised hands

meant I was alive. That raised hands meant I would live.

**SOURCE:** *Smith, C. (n.d.). Playground elegy. Retrieved from http://www.stilljournal.net/clint-smith-poetry.php*