

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>