

Tournament Time

Niagara, and a blond head hollers nigger
above the blade of his down-rolled window,
and the tall teen boys on my ball team abuzz
now in the busy Tim Hortons lot, cursing
at the whip's deaf metal, his silver Honda
joining a main road after the drive-by jeer,
and our Polish coach grows ruddy like we would
if our pigment permitted, and Rav's fist furls
although he is Sikh and says that his turban's
a type of durag, then some older women in wool
with coffee walk over to console us, and soon
the slurs of our upbringing are summoned
and weighed, and a third of my teammates
confessing they were virgins to such words,
and the rest regaling the group about their first
and worst times, and me, the small-island
migrant, seething but keeping my fire
quiet, and nothing to be done but sip on bitter tea,
and coach whose grans were called 'kike' cries
inside a toilet stall, and the weekend misleading
with its goose song and snowmelt,
and the sunshine suggesting it should be warmer
by now, and the criminal chill of this country
still fingering through our purple tracksuits,
and later today the last game screeching on
and on and on, and the whistles for once working
in our tired favour