

“COLORED CHRIST” – POEM BY SUMITRA MUKERJI

For Todd Ayoung's painting

COLORED CHRIST

Passion fruit,
lord,
spitting bubbles in my mouth,
your blood, did not mean to –
just looking for some fun
picking niggers in the bronx
your flesh, he came crawling
out a pit, like a gutter rat,
is black, did not know it,
just looking for a fix, nigger
a dirty word, didn't mean to
only kicked him in the groin
didn't know your word in my mouth
is black, would hurt his mother's
mind didn't know what eye couldn't
see his skin so black with hurt
only meant to teach a lesson
learnt it everyday in school
they said, your eye was blue
didn't know it wasn't true, didn't
know she had a mind, they said
your flesh should smell clean
in my mouth your word tastes sweet
with blood, didn't know that it would
kill him, didn't know it was a lie
your flesh upon the altar, couldn't

crawl through streets at night, so
black couldn't live in the pain
of his people, only kicked them in
the groin, didn't know that it hurt
your flesh spits hate in my eye

Sure we hear your word
in church, I love my neighbour
every night, is black, with
passion, your flesh tastes
good in my mouth tastes rancid
your skin in my eyes the color
of death, didn't mean to
spit sin in my blood, didn't
do it on my own, grandpa said
his grandfather ate flesh, your
flesh, hurts my eye wants black
of night to hide black, my
sin, sure I do it every night
they said it only meant communion
with your body in his mouth
so soiled, he drinks my blood,
grandpa said, they're all the same,
so we lynched him in the square
it wasn't casting stones, we
buried his bones, didn't expect a
resurrection, only mounted him
in your image I loved
didn't mean to rip your skin
so black with pain, didn't know
that it would hurt, only

tied you up in chains, didn't
 do it on my own, only watched
 the cops on T.V., love you
 kick him in the groin
 you motherfucker, they said
 your word meant sin should cleanse
 sin the color of death, your skin
 a thorn in my flesh, didn't
 mean to make him bleed only
 crowned his head with thorns
 only looking for a fix to nail
 your sin upon the altar
 only looking for a cross to bear
 my hate, didn't know that it would
 hurt you, didn't know you had a mind
 lord, didn't know you were human.

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Author's Note:

“Colored Christ” was started in January 1991 as part of a series of poems based on/in response to a set of paintings by Todd Ayoung, an artist friend living in New York City. It was completed in March 1991, after the Rodney King incident in L.A. had aired nationwide on television.

Todd's eponymously titled acrylic painting, *Colored Christ*, and my poem, magnified and printed on foam-board, were exhibited side-by-side at a show under the aegis of The Bronx Council on the Arts at the Bronx Museum in late March, 1991.

The publisher, Sunspot Small Press, later changed its name to Sunspot Press, brought out a few more issues of *Syncopated City* till 1997, and seems to have gone extinct after that.

I, Sumitra Mukerji, hold copyright for the poem and own the painting, gifted to me by Todd.