

## 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. <http://www.stilljournal.net/clint-smith-poetry.php>