

Cornrows

Our slick braids join our scalps,

Lining our heads like streets do a city.

They pull at our edges,

Stringing out our roots.

They tug at our Ebonics,

Releasing our “yalls” and “ain’ts”

Displaying our West Indian

Haitian

African tongues.

They yank at our jazz, at our hip-hop.

The syncopation seeping from seams our braids once tried to sew up.

Iggy

Miley

Robin

Marshall

Kylie,

The fair skinned hands puppeting our industry,

ripping our rhymes to shreds.

You want our sound?

You want our slang?

You want our stiff-napped locks?

Then step your two pale legs into our past, rooted on 3/5^{ths} and segregation,

past built upon whips,

Shackled history that’s been nothing but inferior to the lighter.

You want our fuller lips?

You want our soul?

You want our thicker curves?

Before trying to be a face for our music,

A face for our art,

Grease the tips of your fingers,

Oil your kinky scalps

And patch up your own cornrows.