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Strange Fruit

Donel Arrington
College of the Redwoods

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Strange Fruit (*for Michael Brown*)
by Donel Arrington

“Hands up, hands up up don’t shoot!”
still the same damn strange fruit,
blood on the leaves and blood on the root
now it grows from the street
instead of the trees,
tear gas, sound cannons,
militarized police,

how many children gotta die
before we heal this divide?

societies irrational fear of black men—
putting too many black kids in early coffins

hiding behind badges, and
stand your ground,
crying self defense
as the lights go out
on the wrong side
of the line between right

and now

and it’s a shout out but not
just about Michael Brown
it’s a road that every black person
in America’s been down.

like when I was driving in my car,
heard the siren sound
pull over to the side and the
officer comes out,
“put your hands on the wheel
where I can see them NOW!”
unclipping the holster hand
gun on his belt,
all just for driving in the left lane—
no ticket, no bullets, no harm
no foul.

or the time I was walking
to work, getting stopped just for
being out at 6AM
70 yards away from my house,

“don’t move, let me see some ID!
we’ve been having a lot of robberies you see
and you kind of look suspect to me.”

or the fear of our parents
every time we leave the house.

see I was taught how to
act around police
since I was 11 years’ old
taught that I’d be shot
if I broke the mold—

but even with our hands up,
sometimes they still shoot
black bodies dropping
the same old strange fruit
blood on the leaves
and blood on the root,

and I think that it’s time
we confronted the truth,
it’s 2016
and we as a people
still caught in the noose