



Sliding on mute: a sonata for Botham Jean

by Tammy Gomez

*Pre-set up – open link to this video, and hit pause.
You will listen to this later. Follow instructions below.
bit.ly/botham-video*

You knocked while I was finishing in the kitchen. Had just grabbed a drink and closed the fridge door, to make my way back to the sofa—flickering from the tv giving me just enough light so I wouldn’t stub my toe on the end table again. My chips and salsa were already on the table, and I had the set on mute—and pause.

I thought I heard some steps, slight muttering. But wasn’t sure if I was just hearing things. I’d had a long day and was just happy to be alone for a relaxing night.

Next thing I know that muttering is coming closer, pushing into my apartment, and I am sitting up, “What the, who are you? What are you doing—“

I never got to hear the answer to my questions. I was slammed back into the furniture and the furniture into the wall with such force and velocity, it was like a demon penetrated from the beyond and gusted me into the middle of winter. I felt cold, things were draining out of me, and I couldn’t keep up my good posture. Sliding, everything was sliding. And my view was die ways, sideways, wow, I cannot even think straight. That muttering became some kind of drill sergeant anger, a ferocious female bark, and I wish that had not been the very last thing I ever heard. Why was

the tv on mute at that moment? It was such sweet music on.

[click on YouTube video to start Terence Blanchard music, then continue reading]

When the Levees Broke. I wanted to watch this, it’s the 13th anniversary of Katrina. All the pain, more Black people suffering, water ocean people like me.

Things are broken from me too, now, and stuff is spilling. Out. And I just keep sliding. Sliding in this song of broke things. Down all the way.

[spend the next 8 minutes in stillness, hearing Blanchard’s music and recalling a time when justice seemed imminent for all of us]

Update: *A police officer who claimed she killed a Dallas man in his own apartment in the mistaken belief that he was in her home was indicted Friday on a murder charge, authorities said. The indictment of Amber Guyger comes more than two months after she was arrested in the shooting death of Botham Shem Jean at the Dallas apartment complex where both lived—a killing that sparked days of protests.*

—CNN, November 30, 2018



EDITOR’S NOTE: *A literary ofrenda from Tammy Gómez was offered as part of the November Calaveras and Literary Ofrendas issue of La Voz de Esperanza. It appears in this issue of La Voz coincidentally as the indictment of Guyger was announced. Black Lives Matter!*