

*after Faisal Abdu'Allah's The Count, 2015*

It is dangerous to speak of rape  
in hypothetical terms. Especially  
dangerous if the rape is alleged but  
the woman is real and before that, white.  
This story, existing entirely in a city named  
after oxymoron. *Black Wall Street*. As in yet, another  
thing a nigger cannot scale, climb, or swim through.  
The kind of city that curves the gait of a slave. Dick Rowland,  
a man that forgets, if only for a moment, that this is America.  
A place where he cannot take the same elevator as a white girl.  
Those are our precious things, worth more than a string of pearls—  
Dick's body necklaced over the damp sycamore branch. The story is old.  
I am suffering from griot's lockjaw. I am telling you a black man is swallowing  
his tongue, from the edge of a tree— his neck exhausted and gimp.  
He said the wrong thing to an angel. She was blonde and in her mouth,  
a strawberry. Juice running down her chin, red as the devil. A smile that burns  
the city down, children floundering through ash.

--Thiahera LeSian Nurse