I. PROLOGUE

CHORUS
Give us this day our daily bread

NARRATOR
We
Pledge co-legiance
To the facts
That the United States of America
Is racially healing in public
So you could understand
How some in this nation
Wonder, God
Could dignity be afforded to
All?

CHORUS
Give us this day our daily bread

NARRATOR
The breadth of the task
The asking for bread
The expiring breath
The black odor of dread
Give us this day
Respect for the breadth of the ask
With an expiring breath he called
For a dead woman several years past
Give us this day
Respect for the ghosts
And the murmurs of a man with a speck of bread
Singed like the lord's prayer
Singing in his chokeheld throat
Sitting flat like a scar
Singed like the lord's prayer
Give us this day
The breadth of what's due
What would you kneel for
Assume the posture of casual prayer
A genuflection while levitating buoyed by the neck of a man you are actively robbing of air
Armed robbery of breath
Over some bread and
The wide genocidal breadth of our country's racial timeline
Our country's daily bread
Our injurious history written in
Lightning
The animating factors that authorize violence
give us this day
A shot at peace
A day when you don't have to function knowing the night before a young woman was state sanctioned murdered in her sleep
The lord
The breadth of the task
give us this day...one more breath...
Lord solemnly hear the underlying desperation of the ask
give us this day
Our bread
Enough to feed our ancestors when we pay them respect
give us this day
The breadth of our American stake
Restore the debt of stolen breath...

CHORUS
Give us this day our daily bread

II. BREATH

NARRATOR
A soul to keep
Breathe in relief
The night is fruit
The moon is sweet
Take a piece
Swallow the satellite
Beyond your reach
The night is dream
But I'm not asleep
Not woke
Just awake
I breathe in what I see
I breathe in the night
It smells strangely of fruit to me
Breathe in the chemical shift
When I walk by the police
The smell of all the probabilities
Played out on all of the screens
Breathe in the scenes
Breathe in the night and imagine the time you felt most free...
When
In your life
Have you felt most free?...
I sing america's longest notes
I sometimes forget to breathe
When I do
My cultural differences haven't been tucked into the skirts of the queen
I am free to access an infrastructure of hope
Breathe in the night
The moon is ripe with juice
It smells like autonomy
Smells like fruit beginning to
The night is dream
I sometimes forget to breathe
When I do
My cultural differences haven't been tucked into the skirts of the queen
I am free to access an infrastructure of hope
Breathe in the night
The moon is ripe with juice
It smells like autonomy
Smells like fruit beginning to

CHORUS
In heaven breath is bread
The way Ancestors pay at the gates
Breath becomes
The way Ancestors pay at the gates
In heaven breath is bread

III. ELEGY

Instrumental movement.

IV. BREAD

CHORUS
What does the night say to you
Before you lay your head down
Does the night confide it's proudful truth
Before the night falls does the pride fall too
Or does the pride of the night rise like a hand in salute
What does the night say to you
Before you lay your head down
Does the night confide it's proudful truth
Before the night falls does the pride fall too
Or does the pride of the night rise like a hand in salute

NARRATOR
Before it was a corner
It was a boundless plain that never considered the square edges of man's myopia
Over time
The edges encroached
And brought with them
Paper and value

And back again
Reciprocal energy
Spirit and flesh
These words rolling off my tongue
The first breath of afterdeath in my lungs
After life I just go back to where I came from
Breath is drum
Breathe in Light and smoke
Breath is drum
Breathe in the midnight sun where life never sets
Breath is drum
Ancestors know no death
Breath becomes
The way Ancestors pay at the gates
In heaven breath is bread

The first breath of afterdeath in my lungs
After life I just go back to where I came from
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Breathe in Light and smoke
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Breathe in the midnight sun where life never sets
Breath is drum
Ancestors know no death
Breath becomes
The way Ancestors pay at the gates
In heaven breath is bread

Incarnate
Before it was a constitution
It was a hand written note
Presented to a native woman
As legal tender
She held it to the light
Squinted twice
And laughed at the myopic man
Who tried to pass a counterfeit bill
Before the sun rose that day
The corner knew…

Pride comes before the fall
American avarice too
American pride consumes
Like a starving cub hungry for food
If not Justice for all America
Then how do you choose
Who wins America
Does somebody invariably lose

Before the sun rose that day
The corner already knew
The corner had seen it before
The block knows before the news
The block knows who
America is likely to choose
Before the sun rises
The night tells America’s truth
What does the night say to you
Before you lay your head down
Does the night confide it’s prideful truth
Before the night falls does the pride fall too
Or does the pride of the night rise like a hand in salute
What does the night say to you
Before you lay your head down
Does the night confide it’s prideful truth
Before the night falls does the pride fall too
Or does the pride of the night rise like a hand in salute

Before the sun rose that day
The corner already knew
Before the sun rose that day
The corner already knew
Before there was a cost
There was bread
Before there was socially determined health
We collectively cared for the sick and honored the dead
Before there was qualified immunity
The laws and loyalty to community provided enough force to protect the peace

Before the man
Was taken for some bread
He had access to memory
Of sharecropping in North Carolina
Of making music in church
Of 13 sisters and brothers
Of challenges with sobriety
Of a life before the fall
Before the fall
There was bread
Before the sun rose that day
The corner was already cursed and blessed
Weight of the body
Wait for true equity
Wavering feet
Equally bruised legs
Of course there is before
Much has happened to us
But we, the people are more than ill will be done
Our kingdom once was and shall come
Give us this day
Our bread
Before the fall
Came a duty to keep our ancestors fed
What is the equity owed to the people before American bread
The people for whom the parchment of American purchase is counterfeit
God bless American bread and the hands that have prepared it...
May the bounty be baked into 24 demands
Seasoned by 2,000 seasons
True to our native land
Before the sun rise tomorrow
May we feast on the bread that bought us one more day to try to get it right...

CHORUS
May we feast on the bread
That bought us one more day
To try to get it right...
May we feast on the bread
That bought us one more day
To try to get it right...
May we feast on the bread
That bought us one more day
To try to get it right...

V. BREADTH

In 1619, Jamestown, enslaved a color-based American caste
It took 244 years before Black people were enslaved a voting place in the franchise
1868 the 14th amendment was ratified
Jamestown-citizenship
244 years in between
244 years from 1868 will be the second decade of the NEXT century
By the time there is a parity of Black enslavement and Black political agency, NO one in this room will be alive.
And THAT is the breadth of the task
To create the EQUAL positive effect
Of THAT historical debt
The debt of 12 generations of humans who were not permitted to be who they could have been
THAT is the breadth of the plan
Caste is the infrastructure of our divisions
It is our country’s pre-existing condition
If a person has high blood pressure, it’s not a surprise if they suffer a heart attack
Why are we surprised by the way law enforcement disregards the dignity of Blacks
The breadth of the task
Is to make a future that remembers the breadth of the stolen
To think of joy as an economy
Is to make a future that remembers
Consider the breadth of a man at the very end of a life
He breaks no law that requires the death penalty
But that is what he receives
Consider at the time of his death
There is a viral disease
That literally sees no color
Sees us for what we actually are
As the same
As an interconnected species
It took a blind organism to make the planet stop
And notice
The breadth
And depth
And late spring carelessness by which American law
Presides over black death
The breadth of a life
The breadth of the lives of folks on the block who didn’t have activist intentions
And the breadth of the local activists who supported them with intention

The breadth of our intention to learn the cost of the debt
Our intention to earn back what was lost with his breath
The breadth of the people who ain’t our here for bread
Who are healing the city
Who the city often forgets
The breadth of our intention to learn the cost of the debt
Our intention to earn back what was lost with his breath
The breadth of the people who ain’t our here for bread
Who are healing the city
Who the city often neglects

CHORUS
So much work has been done
Who does the work that’s still left?

NARRATOR
Do you remember 2020?
Do you remember its breadth
Standing on the steps of the Supreme Court after Justice Ginsburg passed,
or standing in Black Lives Matter Plaza, near the white house, days after protesters were tear-gassed
Do you remember 2020?
Do you remember its breadth
I found myself transported to the root of the American experiment.
Beyond anger, or grief, what led so many of us to gather in those moments?
What are the ties that bind us together?
The breadth of common hope that we could be “better” than this...
That with clear eyed understanding of our social pathologies, there existed a pervasive doe eyed idealism underneath.

There was a ‘reason’ why we demanded better of our country...
because we collectively knew we were ‘capable’ of better…that like a teacher’s most gifted student after failing several critical tests, we collectively knew that we could be more accurately defined by our promise than by our failures.

The promise of what’s possible
That’s the breadth of the task
To make possible
The breadth of the promise…

CHORUS
So much work has been done
Who does the work that’s still left?

Libretto by Marc Bamuthi Joseph.