if I write a poem
by Jazz Money

if I write a poem
it's for the pen
banned from my grandmother's hands

and if I write
it's for our language
stolen from the mouths
of babies in cribs

and if I write a poem
it's so that our children
will read some truth
of their family

and if I write
it's because our story
hasn't been written
          by us
          for us

and if I write
it's because I hate the structure
the capitalism
the greed
the fury

I write a poem
because I love this Country
I write a word
because I love my daughter
          who isn't yet born

I write because there is no truth yet
no justice

and if I write a poem
it's because my mother can't understand
why I weep into the soil
but she cries with me all the same

and if I write
it's because I love a woman
and others do
and cannot write about their love

and if I write a word
it's to stop me from burning
within
it's to stop me from burning
the city down
and baring my breasts

wailing with my clapsticks
a song that boils in my chest
in my soul
that no one has taught me the words to
yet

I write a poem
because I was raised off Country
and I yearn and yearn for a place I don't hold
that holds me

and if I don't write a poem
it's for the magnificence of lightning
of cicadas in chorus
          rhythms too beautiful to capture

and if I don't write a word
it's because I love this Country
and all the ways I love her burns
          all the ways I love her burns

and if I don't write
it's because I love a woman
and that is a sacred thing

if I don't write a word
it's because my mother loves me
every way she can

and if I don't write
it's because I can't bring my baby
into a world on fire

and if I don't write
don't think I have nothing to say
          if I don't write
          don't think I have nothing to say

and if I don't write
it's because this language
these letters
are not worthy

and if I write a word
on the inside of my mouth
in the dust
in the sand
it's because I know
no other truth at all