

## Crystal S. Rudds

I have an MFA from Indiana University-Bloomington and a PhD from the University of Illinois, but poetry for me is less about craft or research than an attempt to communicate from my soul. I appreciate Root Work's mission to elevate the power of black memory and meditation. Recently, these practices have begun to revive me through interviews with my grandmother. My poems have appeared in Obsidian, NightBallet Press, and most recently, as part of the collective poem, American Gun, published by Big Shoulders Books. I currently teach African American literature in Salt Lake City, Utah (yep).



# Tekhenu

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*Tekhenu is about a parent losing their memory and praying to be remembered. But it is also about how one survives any type of pillage -- whether by disease or enslavement and oppression. The work that African Americans have had to do to recover their connection to ancestry is a travesty. But our great loss has also yielded many treasures that the Other cannot understand. This is what the Ark recalls me to: at once the site of mourning and a powerful inheritance.*

## Tekhenu

When I die, let it be with sand in my mouth, widow's peak upside down.  
Let the mystery of my days be shrouded by the black dirt of forgiveness.  
So quick, to live is gain. Longer: the varicose meandering away from intention. I meant  
to go to the store. I was looking for gold. That I've forgotten  
what I've forgotten is entombed in your eyes, a dirge wet on the wind. There, now, daughter.  
Bury deep if you bury. Set your own price. When the excavators come, they will think we shed our layers on  
purpose.

*Tekhenu: Originally found in Ancient Kemet, tekhenu is a tall, narrow monument that rises in the air like a finger pointing to Ra. Often called an "obelisk" in later cultures that have appropriated the form.*