

## **Naked**

Benjamin Zephaniah

Dis is me naked. Unclothed, undressed under  
the light of all the Gods that you dare  
imagine, waiting to be touched with as  
many versions of the truth as you  
can conjure up in your turned off  
mind.

Dis is me. Give me your theory, give me  
your opinion, give me your truth, give me  
your big bad holy book, let me know  
exactly what tried and tested faith  
keeps you asleep.

Dis is me, hungry for the priceless forbidden, looking  
for the man who wrote the superhighway code  
so that I can rob his richness.  
He got insurance, he got the state, let me get him.  
I wanna find game show hosts and put  
the bastards on trial. I wanna kill educated ignorance.

Dis is me naked, revolting in front of you, I'm  
not much but I give a damn. Lovers look  
at me, haters look at me as I Exhibit  
my love and my fury on dis desperate  
stage.

Dis is me naked. I love being naked.  
I look at my naked self and I know  
that I was made for nakedness. I see  
my neighbours naked, I see booted men and  
suited men naked, and women in purdah  
naked, and all the priests and politicians  
who I despise are naked looking  
at the truth, facing reality, having to  
deal with themselves, by themselves. Praise  
the Gods for the black, brown, white, fat,  
thin, one legged, blind, bent and uneven  
naked bodies. Praise the female Gods  
and the older Gods for the naked body  
beautiful.

Dis is me. Not hanging out on Soho Road,  
Handsworth, not hanging out on Railton Road,  
Brixton, not chilling on Grosvenor Road,  
Bristol, not even wheeling and  
dealing on the sad streets of  
London, west central. Naked I am, fixed

in reality, not looking for a fix,  
not pickpocketing in Piccadilly.

I pay tax, they force me to pay for my oppression.

Dis is my mother. She read a poster on a  
hot tin street in Jamaica that told her  
that Britain loves her. She turned  
into the dream that made me the  
naked cop beater that I  
am today. I do all dis stuff for my  
mother and she cries because I will  
not go to church.

Dis is me naked, jealous, passionate, listening  
for the naked sound of liberty,  
waiting for the militants to arise, pouring  
the lubricant sweat into the system  
of rebellion.

Dis is me invading the blank page with my  
endless aerodynamic pen, driven like  
optimistic hope, driven, raging,  
desperate, hungry, inspired by the  
chit-chat overheard on stinky smoky  
buses  
turned on by the politics of the kitchen.

Dis is me. Dreadlocks I. Rastafari. Rastafari.  
Behold, how good an how pleasant  
it is for revolutionaries to dwell together  
in the house of the lord. Knowing that  
the real God will liberate those who liberate  
themselves I shall fear no religion.  
Took away the dried up intermediary, got  
a direct line to the great ganja  
creator. Dis is me. Rastafari, Rastafari,  
Dreadlocks I.

Dis is me blowing my lonely black trumpet.

Dis is me mysteriously trying to smile, trying  
to convince myself that dis is the  
lesser of evils. I stagger from  
column to column stealing from its  
stolen concrete as I go. 'Fall Babylon,  
Fall Babylon and take your bankers  
with you,' I chant as I piss on parliament.

Dis is me, standing under understanding,

getting up and over, overstanding the  
corruption of our role models. The  
lack of courage of our athletes burns me.  
The Vegan sex is sweet.

Dis is my music. Loud, deep, Jungle music.  
Heavy, roots, Reggae dub stuff.  
I rave like a lover, I love like a raver  
I know it's only Hip-Hop Rock but I like it,  
I'm so proud of it. We rocked the world  
with it. We turned on generations  
with it, made love and riots with  
it, we created the magic  
but we still don't own the magic.  
Why must we still struggle for our royalty cheque?

Dis is me fatherless, childless. Who do I go to and for what?  
Who shall I cry to? Who shall I cry for?  
I need babies to recite to  
I need babies to recite to me  
my life is full of lonely childless eternities  
where only poetry gives me life  
and nakedness gives me knowledge.  
When I cry they want to arrest me, when I'm in  
need I'm suspicious, when I cross the road  
they ask me why.

Dis is me. I hate dis government as much as I  
hated the one before it and I have reason  
to believe that I will hate the one to come.  
How did these lefties reach dis Tory place?

Dis is me, squeeze me. Let me free me.  
I have come to realise that what you can do for me  
I can do much better for me.  
Let me do for my loved ones what you will not do for them  
I want to hold the hands of my loved ones  
(Those who have no one to vote for)  
and cause a victorious rumble in dis black universe.  
I am naked, whispering screams in the church  
of the impatient revolutionaries. I may be  
vulnerable, I may not have the education of my critics or  
the wealth of my arresting officers, but I have  
never felt the need to wear a uniform in order  
to break laws and I have never felt the need to  
eat dead bodies to feel like a good human.

Poem published in *Too Black, Too Strong* (Highgreen: Bloodaxe Books, 2001)

Audio recording featured on *Naked* (One Little Indian, 2004)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7tTCLGyw8w>