American Life in Poetry
American Life in Poetry: Column 907
BY Kwame Dawes

War, impending war and exile forced by war, are increasing preoccupations in the work of Ladan Osman—not so much the wars, but the damage that they do to everyday people who are trying to live in this world. In “Sun to God”, these walking children and their parents, these laughing children and their parents, will eventually start to run, and will eventually stop laughing. It is a vividly captured accounting of the wars that continue to be waged around us.

Sun to God

By Ladan Osman

The children walked.
Then they began to run.
Why are we running, one asked?
No one knew. They ran faster.
They began laughing.
Why are we laughing?
Not one knew. They laughed more.
It was the eve of war but they didn’t know.
The children walked.
The children’s parents walked.
The parents’ parents walked.
Their shadows spilled ahead.
Their shadows lagged behind.
Then, they began to run.
No one was laughing.