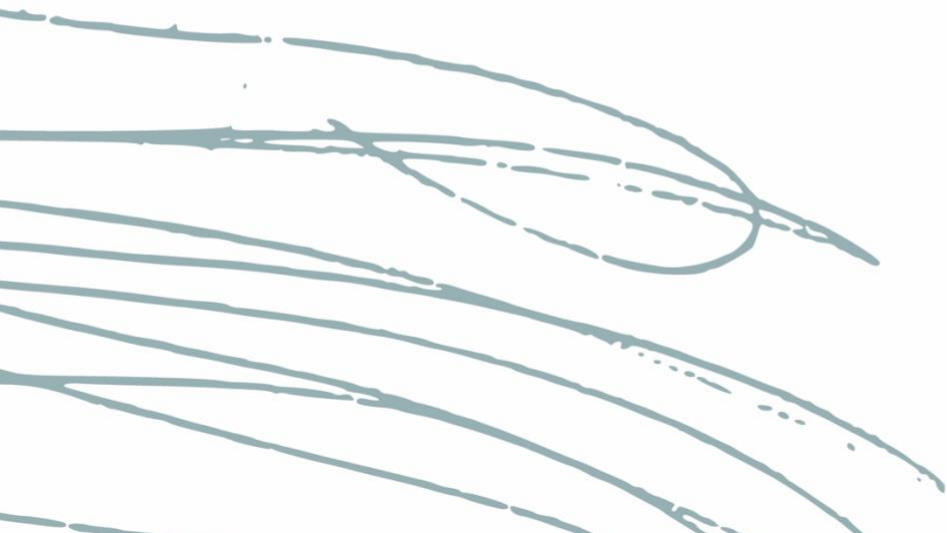


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American Life *in* Poetry



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BY Kwame Dawes

Only 0.03 percent of us end up doing jury duty each year. But we all carry an awareness that it can be us next. According to casino.org a quarter of American adults serve on jury duty at least once in their lifetime. Kathleen McClung's poem reminds us of the cost of such duty. The poem appears in her 2020 chapbook, *A Juror Must Fold In On Herself*.

The Forewoman Speaks

Among us twelve, just three have raised a child.
We're mostly gray and promise to be fair
and wonder if the prosecutor smiled
to greet or warn, or both. We go nowhere
for weeks. We're stiff and silent in these rows,
our faces stony though we ache to cry,
delete that damn surveillance video
(Exhibit A) that shows a girl, six, die,
night, crosswalk, SUV. And in the end,
our verdict signed and dated, read aloud,
we will resume routine—go meet a friend
for lunch on Harrison, admire a cloud
above the bridge, ten thousand cars an hour,
some backseats full of kids.

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