

CANNING MEMORIES

by Frank X Walker

Indian summer
meant Saturday morning courtyards
and door screens opened and waiting
for urban signs of harvest.
No new moons or first frosts,
just the welcome staccato and horn
of an old flatbed truck, overalls
and mud-caked boots.

Grandmothers who still clicked
their tongues and called up the sound
of a tractor in the daybreak,
the aroma of fresh turned earth
and the secret location of the best
blackberry patch
like they were remembering
old lovers,
planted themselves
a half squint away from the palming
and weighing of potatoes
stringbeans, kale, turnips, sweetcorn
onions and cabbage.

They seeded themselves
close enough to see each other
bent low in the fields, pulling weeds
dispensing verbal insecticide
gingham dresses gathered in front
cradling cucumbers and almost ready
Big Boy tomatoes
destined for kitchen window sills
and mason jars.

They break sacred ground far away
from the acres and acres of red brick
and concrete neighbors
to be close enough to the earth
to know that,
“if all city folk plant is family and friends
alls they gonna get is funerals.” 🍷

Frank X Walker is founder of the Affrilachian Poets and director of the African American and Africana Studies program at the University of Kentucky.

PHOTO by Brandall Atkinson.

