

Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer: In Memoriam

By June Jordan

You used to say, "June?
Honey when you come down here you
supposed to stay with me. Where
else?"

Meanin home
against the beer the shotguns and the
point of view of whitemen don'
never see Black anybodies without
some violent itch start up.

The ones who
said, "No Nigga's Votin in This town...
lessen it be feet first to the booth"
Then jailed you
beat you brutal
bloody/battered/beat
you blue beyond the feeling
of the terrible

And failed to stop you.
Only God could but He
wouldn't stop
you
fortress from self-
pity

Humble as a woman anywhere
I remember finding you inside the laundromat
in Ruleville

lion spine relaxed/hell
what's the point to courage
when you washin clothes?

But that took courage

just to sit there/target
to the killers lookin
for your singin face
perspiry through the rinse
and spin

and later
you stood mighty in the door on James Street
loud callin;

"BULLETS OR NO BULLETS!
THE FOOD IS COOKED
AN' GETTIN COLD!"

We ate
A famity tremulous but fortified
by turnips/okras/handpicked
like the lilies

filled to the very living
full

one solid gospel
(sanctified)
one gospel
(peace)

one full Black lily
luminescent
in a homemade field

of love

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June Jordan, who was born in Harlem and reared in Bedford-Stuyvesant, is a poet and novelist. Her most recent book is "Things That I Do In The Dark," selected poems.