

Protest Poem

Whatever they want out there
in the streets the answer
is no.

No to the never
forgetting. No to the fat of yes.

No to the body's meridian, the tyranny
of health, the symmetry
of death.

Whatever the pope is calling for,
no. No to the shamans
divining a higher self.
No to machete, corpses
unearthed. No bullet
no background check.
No chokehold, no freedom.
No to the treaty,
open hands
of the medicine man.

No to the deathbird,
to winter and data, human
cargo lost at sea.

No to the Whereabouts Unknown List
No to the oil slick's
rainbow, arabesques left
by shadow dogs
pissing in the snow.

No to the envelope of sleep, divine
intervention. To the sadhu
who held his arm overhead for thirty-two years
and wants to lower it—the arm simply says
no.

No to Adam
and the atom of yes, its storm
of no and no and no

We should have known

it would end up like this, a pack
of slavering mongrels
chasing us into
the impoverishment
of no.

Yes we are practiced
at poker
faces, shake our heads no-no/yes-yes

but no to ahimsa, to mothlight and Ginsberg,
his hipsterish angels who blathered on,
grew bitter and rich,

robbed our sons and daughters
of their no.