

RED HYA CINTH

A Journal of Writing & Art



On the Subway (Through His Lens)

by Carlos Herring

*A response to
"On the Subway"*
by Sharon Olds

The woman and I face each other.
Her feet are tiny shod in nude pumps
with a distinct red bottom. We are stuck on
opposite ends of the car, of life, but yet we breathe
the same air. She has the casual look of not a care
in the world. She is wearing a dark fur, a whole real fur,
the whole skin of an animal. I have on my work clothes,
all black, even my sneakers. I look at her done-up face,
she looks at my dingy attire—I can see the look in her eyes.
I've seen it before. She thinks I can take her things, she
thinks I want her things. Little does she know she holds all
the power. With a scream or one word, I will be guilty without
trial. She is White and I am Black and without meaning her
white privilege puts her miles away. There is no way she knows
how easy her White skin makes it for her. There is no way she
will ever understand that I am judged wrongly based on the color
of my skin. Here it is that look again, I've seen that look before.
She raises her head high, crossing her legs as the red on the bottom
of her shoes remind me of the bloodshed from my people's backs as
they built America. My back starts to sting... I close my eyes as I think.
I think about my dissertation that is soon due. I think about my wife
and daughter at home. I close my eyes smiling, I think and I think...
Till we rise.

Red Hyacinth