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## Bahamian, speak

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## **Bahamian, speak**

trained to speak a language  
taught to wield its power

told it be the way out,  
this language is called proper  
english, the correct way to speak

told as a child the way I spoke  
was “bad,” “ghetto,” “over da hill talk,”  
speaking “that way”  
“too Bahamian”

but now, we say our words with humour,  
forgetting the shame

our dialect (Nation Language, Bahamian English)  
decorating performances in our schools,  
dressing plays at the Dundas, “sip sip” and “grape vine” in *The Punch*.

It was embarrassing,  
for chirren gettin’ an education,  
talkin’ Bahamian only at ‘appropriate’ times  
during lunch an’ happy hours, rat bat nights

but now, our dialect is fun and entertaining, somet’ing to laugh at,  
somet’ing dat really Bahamian, cause dis we tings, be a true true Bahamian,

cause if you is Bahamian,  
you know the rawness, the rhythm,  
the movement of speakin’ Bahamian

it can’t be fully captured  
on paper, it gatta be heard  
it is fluid in motion and sound,  
to hear it, is to see it.

So when you ask me, “Wha’ happen to yuh Bahamian accent?”  
my response can never be simple cause I fuh sure ain’ loss it

it was molded and masked through training  
paddles on knuckles, uniformed classes, british/american teachers,  
serving tourists in bars, working in offshore banking,

and grandma's insistence on speakin' right,  
cause it would get me far,  
but the place I went, was too far,  
from her, my truth, my roots.

But come to find out, I slip in an' out  
of languages wit' ease and discomfort

as I live between worlds of home and e'rry where else  
in transition I be, through tongues,  
what I was made to speak and what be natural.