

New Poetry by D.R. James: “Surreal Expulsion”



COAL BLACK TUNNEL / *image by Amalie Flynn*

Surreal Expulsion

–for Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School

Fourteen chairs loiter, emptied, no young bodies adjusting for the next lesson, hand-raising, class-clown antic, contemplative talk, pat show of teen contempt, rhythm beaten with pencil, palm, bouncing knee, jouncing heal, wise-crack, step in the impossible problem never to be solved. Instead, more of the same news, the same vows taxiing the hellish hallways of feigned intention but never taking off—the same dazed moments of the dead. Perhaps their freed spirits now see through the coal-black tunnel of some eternity right into the next school's beehive of victims. Perhaps they still shadow their three steady mentors who stood staunch ground in the slow-motion flow of high-speed ammo. The clip of names shoots holes clean through law's callous gut—

Aaron, Helena, and Alex,
Carmen, Peter, Cara, Chris, and Meadow,
Scott, Alaina, Martin, Alyssa, and Nick,
Jamie, Luke, Gina, and "Guac" Joaquin—

whose roll call claims only an absurd third of a minute, while their totaled lives witnessed nearly 5 thousand wheels of the moon through some 75 trillion miles. But unlike the pull of that implacable moon, the glib fever of 'prayers and condolences' can't turn the tide of memory's radiating its fixed fissures scored by shards of glass and bone. Here, we're left to settle the moonscape of *Too Late* for those whose expelled footsteps befuddle us. And lauding immortality soothes no better. We know we relax at our children's peril, run rash risk of shoring up the open/closed-carry-frenzied fight, take false hope in the bundles of white-washed bills. Anthony Borges took five bullets to shield twenty

surviving friends, sacrificed his soccer stardom
because somehow *he* knew what he had to do.
His lacerated back and shattered femur scream
in a language we now must teach across America.