Poem by Peter Smith ‘71

They came to this country in small filthy ships

Shackled in chains, and beaten with whips

They had no time of their own as they worked their long days,

But always found time for moments of praise

The men were forced to look at the ground,

And keep their mouths shut when whites were around

The women nursed whites, scrubbed toilets and floors

But were forbidden to walk through the “Whites Only” doors

I wonder if whites really do understand

When they say after the war our slaves stayed on our land

I wonder if blacks simply felt cursed

And leaving meant going from bad to worse

“Cause being black in this country has not been a plus

You don’t often get asked to the front of the bus

And only last month crosses burned in the night

Sparking emotions of anger and fright

It’s time for those flames to be eternally cooled

And stop the ignorant actions of a handful of fools

As we gather together to honor black roots,

The difference between us? God gave some dark suits.

It’s been said before but I’ll say it again

All that’s important lies under the skin.

Copyright Peter Smith ‘71