

Jane Fernandez

And Friday is not my name!

You gave me a name
Never stopping to ask for mine
Name: Friday
As if language is white and nothing else, nothing in-between
As if you have all the answers
And I must beg the questions!

If you knew my language
Older than yours
You would know
That you had only a country to name
I had a continent to name
You are called by one name
Nice, and neat and sanitised,
I am called by many.

If you had asked
I could have told you
My name changes with the seasons
And I learn to be something else for each season
And for each of my names
I become someone to someone else
And only I can fulfill my destiny!
Yes, my name is Adom
My name is Chinua
My name is Essien
My name is Daudi !
And Friday is not my name!

If you had asked
I could have told you
I am God's Blessing
I am God's Gift
I am Sixth-born
I am Beloved!
These are my names.

I could have told you
I am more than a person

I am a dance that does not rest
I twirl and shift and move and glide
And the sounds of the birds, the ocean, the earth meet in me.

If you had asked
I could have told you
That my history is not limited to
Amistad and Senegal
I could have told you
My history is older than nations
I could have told you
My Gods are many-
I could have told you
About Ashe
The God whose thought was the first whisper
The first word . . . the first roar!
I could have told you
Of stories older than yours
Of colours rich in my skin
Of music from the earth's centre
Of love pouring from the sky
Of pain and sacrifice
And my people in chains and free
Rising to "build towers in the sky"
And the dreaming is always old and new and never done

And when I remember Friday
I remember
Your language was never enough to contain me!