**Facing It**

**By: Yusef Komunyakaa, 1947**

My black face fades,

hiding inside the black granite.

I said I wouldn’t,

dammit: No tears.

I’m stone. I’m flesh.

My clouded reflection eyes me

like a bird of prey, the profile of night

slanted against morning. I turn

this way--the stone lets me go.

I turn that way--I’m inside

the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

again, depending on the light

to make a difference.

I go down the 58,022 names,

half-expecting to find

my own in letters like smoke.

I touch the name Andrew Johnson;

I see the booby trap’s white flash.

Names shimmer on a woman’s blouse

but when she walks away

the names stay on the wall.

Brushstrokes flash, a red bird’s

wings cutting across my stare.

The sky. A plane in the sky.

A white vet’s image floats

closer to me, then his pale eyes

look through mine. I’m a window.

He’s lost his right arm

inside the stone. In the black mirror

a woman’s trying to erase names:

No, she’s brushing a boy’s hair.

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