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My Ball

Rachelle M. Parker

It was MY ball so they had to let us play.
“We were here first.” We said. Loud.
We dribbled the ball, right hand to left.
“Y’all always trying to push us off the court.”
Those boys would bargain, but nope, we didn’t move.

We were up at dawn to play. There were
other things we wanted to do and this was
first.

Then one of those boys started liking on you and he
got up early too, to play. Us against him. He
named me Shorty, you Tall-y. Girl, you only had
me by an inch off the ends.

Even still, those boys would always choose down until we
were finally last, split up, one for each side. They tried to
play around us and passed the ball over our heads.
They weren’t going to do that to girls like us. We
dug deep into our gymnasium. The coached practices,
fundamental ball handling, bounce passes and chest
passes.

We wanted to be part of the play. Score. So in secret
we teamed up. Us on different sides to get us some
points, passing, dribbling, shooting. We never went in
for no layups,, too much body. Contact. Too many hands.
Checking. We stayed on the outside and made them come to us.

Pull up, shoot, swish--that day, in the same game,
we showed two of those boys. We slapped five and ran
backwards down the court.

Half that summer went by before those boys realized and said,
“Best take ‘em together. It’s better.”
“Word.”

Rachelle M. Parker has work that appears in *Tupelo Quarterly*, *Lips*, *Creations Magazine*, *New Jersey English Journal* 2016 and anthologies *The BreakBeat Poets Volume 2: Black Girl Magic* and *Poeming Pigeons: Poems About Food*. She is a Patricia Dobler Poetry Award 2017 Honorable Mention, the winner of the Pat Schneider Poetry Contest 2014 and was awarded fellowships from Tin House Summer Workshop Poetry, Willow Arts Alliance and Callaloo Creative Writing at Brown University and the poetry editor for *Peregrine*, the journal for Amherst Writers and Artists.