

And How Could I Live On (for Betty Shabazz)

Live? How could I live on—knowing:.....Oh sure I could hold on
Wait—worry—But I had to hear the sobs—I know what I must look
like

Live? I did live on—when the bullets rained I fell—over the girls I
knew he was gone—I knew I had to change things

We were partners—you know—we thought as one—Sometimes he
thought it was all—him—why not:::I knew::::it was us

The changes—the acceptable changes—The work—The worry

But We Pulled Through

The people who used us—stole from us—tried to divide us from each
other

But we pulled through

We were at the plateau—not resting but catching our breaths—The girls
were doing all—right—a stumble here—and there—but all right

Then this—this mark that could not be erased—the mistake that could not
be corrected:.....I only wanted to Help her

Help cleanse her

Help tame her hate

Her fears

that thing that ran in his family

I brought the boy home hoping trying yes praying scared I was too old too
tired to make a difference but trying

We argued:::and we argued:::but this to me—I didn't feel like it

I wanted my cross word puzzle and late night radio—I wanted peace

I felt him before I heard him:::::Heard him before I saw him:::Called
out MALCOLM don't do this to me

And he threw gasoline on me

MALCOLM don't do this to yourself:::::Stop Now

and he lit the match

MALCOLM I called MALCOLM MALCOLM

and he tossed it

How could I live on—like some thing out of Richard Wright's poem—like
an object for people to come view—like a shadow of myself No I could
survive but could not live on Knowing my grandbaby::::: named for a great
man who loved me::::: wanted needed insisted upon My Death

I could not live on and wake up—from that nightmare