

I called a meeting with no agenda.  
The only thing I had to offer was a poem and a bowl of black beans.  
I had burned the beans the night before, walked away before the water started  
boiling and then forgot about them. I want to learn how to cook beans perfectly, to  
pay attention better, to not walk away, to not forget, to not be so careless, to feed  
my lover and myself.

I called a meeting with no agenda.  
The only thing I had to offer was a poem and a bowl of black beans.  
I asked for nothing in return for this moment of gathering.  
Just show up.  
What does it mean for us to show up for each other right now?

Sometimes I have a hard time waking up in the morning.  
So I called a meeting. And you showed up.  
What will we create together if no one ask us to make anything?  
I make you black beans. I did not burn them this time.

Mao says, “a revolution is not a dinner party.”  
But the only thing I had to give was a poem and a bowl of black beans.

*Who dares to tell us  
we are poor and powerless?  
We keep treasure  
any king would count as dear.  
Come on, Pretty Baby.  
Our souls can't be crushed...*

I can't write another manifesto.  
I have tried.  
Even though my soul hurts a lot right now.

They are bombing our children.  
Wesley's cousin is dead.  
They are shooting our children.  
Walking down the street in their neighborhood,  
Playing at the playground,  
In their grandmother's backyard.  
20 shots fired.

I can't find the words that will make them stop killing our children.  
They have been doing it for a very long time.

The only thing I know how to do is make black beans.  
And the only thing I can offer is a poem.  
It is not a dinner party. Nor is it a revolution.

But what if the provocation is in the gathering?  
In the waking up even when our souls hurt?  
In the learning how to feed ourselves and our people?

It was snowing this morning in New York.  
I had a hard time getting out of bed today.  
Thinking about Austin.  
Maybe this isn't a manifesto but a reminder to call Florinda tonight.  
And ask her if she has eaten.

-Virginia Grise  
Bronx, NY 2018