

# alternate names for black boys

By Danez Smith

1. smoke above the burning bush
2. archnemesiis of summer night
3. first son of soil
4. coal awaiting spark & wind
5. guilty until proven dead
6. oil heavy starlight
7. monster until proven ghost
8. gone
9. phoenix who forgets to un-ash
10. going, going, gone
11. gods of shovels & black veils
12. what once passed for kindling
13. fireworks at dawn
14. brilliant, shadow hued coral
15. (I thought to leave this blank  
but who am I to name us nothing?)
16. prayer who learned to bite & sprint
17. a mother's joy & clutched breath

Source: *Poetry* (March 2014)