

# American Income

By Afaa Michael Weaver

The survey says all groups can make more money  
if they lose weight except black men...men of other colors  
and women of all colors have more gold, but black men  
are the summary of weight, a lead thick thing on the scales,  
meters spinning until they ring off the end of the numbering  
of accumulation, how things grow heavy, fish on the  
ends of lines that become whales, then prehistoric sea life  
beyond all memories, the billion days of human hands  
working, doing all the labor one can imagine, hands  
now the population of cactus leaves on a papyrus moon  
waiting for the fire, the notes from all their singing gone  
up into the salt breath of tears of children that dry, rise  
up to be the crystalline canopy of promises, the infinite  
gone fishing days with the apologies for not being able to love  
anymore, gone down inside earth somewhere where  
women make no demands, have fewer dreams of forever,  
these feet that marched and ran and got cut off, these hearts  
torn out of chests by nameless thieves, this thrashing  
until the chaff is gone out and black men know the gold  
of being the dead center of things, where pain is the gateway  
to Jerusalems, Bodhi trees, places for meditation and howling,  
keeping the weeping heads of gods in their eyes.

Source: *Poetry* (March 2007)