

# Apollo

By Elizabeth Alexander

We pull off  
to a road shack  
in Massachusetts  
to watch men walk

on the moon. We did  
the same thing  
for three two one  
blast off, and now

we watch the same men  
bounce in and out  
of craters. I want  
a Coke and a hamburger.

Because the men  
are walking on the moon  
which is now irrefutably  
not green, not cheese,

not a shiny dime floating  
in a cold blue,  
the way I'd thought,  
the road shack people don't

notice we are a black  
family not from there,  
the way it mostly goes.  
This talking through

static, bounces in space-  
boots, tethered  
to cords is much  
stranger, stranger

even than we are.

Elizabeth Alexander, "Apollo" from *Poetry* (April 1992). Reprinted with the permission of the author.

Source: *The Poetry Anthology, 1912-2002* (Poetry magazine, 2002)



Born in Harlem, Elizabeth Alexander was educated at Yale, Boston University, and the University of Pennsylvania, where she took her doctorate. She has been on the faculties at Haverford College, the University of Chicago, Smith, and is the former chair of the African American Studies Department at Yale. Her first book, *The Venus Hottentot*, includes a tour de force monologue, spoken by Sara Baartman who was taken from South Africa and exhibited before European audiences as anatomical oddity. Other poems use a variety of voices, including the boxer Muhammad Ali, to address racial, gender, and cultural divisions. In 2009 she read one of her poems at President Obama's inauguration.