

CORTNEY LAMAR CHARLESTON

It's Important I Remember That Politics Is a Contact Sport—

as evidenced by the paraphernalia in his locker,
a token of patronage for the President of the United States,
a man he and his team's owner are known to be partial to.

It sits there in full view of the television cameras, almost
pornographic, explicitly red, tattooed with a tagline in white
lettering that makes some shiver and others frenzy.

Fanatics: the label *fan* shortens this word
or shortens a fuse, most certainly.

He, the president, said *get that son of a bitch
off the field* and people exploded into exclamation points
while an ancestor took a knee in me: anthem, anathema.

Back when, the outrage dissipated so quickly
over their deflating of the football, caught red-handed
from applying pressure, but the outrage over deflating
the black person's lungs elapsed even faster, their killer
caught red-handed from blood, the phrase's Scottish origin.

How funny, then, for all these famous men involved
in deadly games to get off scot-free, without a substantial tax;
how much it hurts, then, that they get to skate and play the hero.

Sadly we're here yet again: the star of star quarterbacks
flashing his endorsement smile, teeth purely white, after
his latest Super Bowl victory. The commentators sing
his praises, call him undoubtedly the greatest of all-time,
the iconic leader of the Patriots, never to be forgotten.

I reflect a moment and recall the original patriot
was a black man shot dead by the British in Boston;
I reflect a moment and can't recall his name
because there have been too many shot dead like him since.

At times I'm heartened hardly anybody outside this country
cares about our gridiron game; always I'm disheartened
less than nobody inside this country cares about us,
even though we're sacrificing on that field, taking shots.

CORTNEY LAMAR CHARLESTON

To the torso.
For less than millions.

To the head.
For less than nothing.