

Growing Up, Worlds Apart (August—December 2014)

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“What I didn’t understand,” you replied
as we talked of our first contacts with blacks,
“was their hands, the colors—the browns not wrapped

around to the palms. Where did all that pink
come from—skin like ours?” I nodded, recalled
the plush of tawny cream under the look

of dark leather, in a handclasp. Nothing
rough to trouble kids. But what could have slipped
from our childhood puzzles into the shapes

of dead black bodies, young unarmed men dropped?—
splayed or crumpled, ten so far this year, killed
by white police (will there be indictments?).

Tint is what it is. More, what the hand does—
make, wreck; cushion or calm. Who trained our eyes,
stained too white to grasp the tangle of defilements?