

Ashes

by [Paul Martin](#) in the [March 1, 2017](#) issue

The palms we raised in celebration  
burned to ashes,  
moistened with oil.  
Death's greasy stain on our foreheads,  
not easy to brush off.

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When my barber combs the hair  
off my forehead, she stiffens,  
and talk about the bright day strains  
to recover the easy way between us.

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Without the body to kneel before,  
to cry over and touch,  
we feel awkward—  
rows of chairs facing  
a polished urn on a pedestal.

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Before I start the new fire, I shovel  
out the cold ashes and scatter them  
over the vegetable garden, a white dust  
the wind drives back  
into my eyes and mouth.