Color Is Not a Weapon I Wear to Dare You by Kim M. Baker

Inspired by *Death of Socrates*. by Jacques-Louis David

1. Socrates
You have gathered here to witness my abscission from the tree of life.
You claim I have profaned the young men of Athens.
So you have condemned me to my humane, yet untimely, death
even as you pretend to see no evil hear no evil speak no evil.

*I know that I know nothing.*
Nothing of the fear that makes you able to eliminate me.
Fear of my being different, fear of your seemingly imminent injury.
Wisdom is not knowledge.
It is the absence of fear in the face of difference!
You can try to eradicate me and my ideas.
But all you do is chain yourself to the blight of earthly worries.
My wife waves on her way out, but not to me.
She pays homage to her own fantasy that this, this is the end.
But this crimson goblet of hemlock is not the bane.
The soul does not end in death.
Quick! Let me drink!
Then I, Socrates, will be soaring in immortal glory!

Hurry, hand me my lyre.
You are all much too stricken pretending to lament my leaving.
This is a time of joy!
Let me sing as my soul makes its way to another!

2. Joan of Arc
You stake me with your tall pillar of fear.
Call me heretic and sorceress.
Toss a black cat onto the pyre of this witch, so you believe.
But your fear is not my military prowess.
Your dread stems from questioning my faith and from my cross dressing.
What is a woman to do who must fight men at their own battles?
After capture, you attempt to molest and rape me.
That is why I continue to don the hosen, boots, and tunic of combat,
my chastity protection when you force me back into a dress,
back into submission in the name of God.
But God is not yours alone!
Those who bear you in their wombs are also made in His likeness
and soon quicken their own faith.

*I know that I know nothing.*
So lash me to your weapon of suppression.
But heed and know that this is not the last scene of death
in which the righteous will kill the wise.

*Wisdom is not simply acceptance* of death in the face of ignorance,
*but the absence of fear in the face of difference.*
*So light the flame!*

*Wisdom cannot be executed and the innocent cannot truly die.*
3. Michael Brown
Yet another day, you drive up to me in your squad car.
I'm no fatherly white philosopher or medieval heroine
but a young, colorful kid walking the yellow line of my life.
I'm aware of the metal of your protection,
aware of the way you see only another young black male making mayhem.
You are afraid before you think.
It's instinct.
Fight or flight.
But you cannot flee.
You are here to protect, but, evidently, not me.
You draw the weapon of your ancestry,
of your white supremacy.
It does not matter if it's Socrates' goblet of hemlock,
Joan of Arc's pyre of misogynist fire,
or your bigoted hip-riding pistol.
The armament of hate makes no matter.
Fear begets hate.
Hate begets superiority.
Superiority begets directive,
that lockjaw law that some lives are worth more than others.
I know that I know nothing.
I'm just the 2014 Land of the Free homeboy poster child for my ancestors,
like the one mistaken for someone who'd punched a police officer.
At least my killing is clean.
That martyr was blue as well as black after being beaten
with fists, flashlights, night sticks, and radios of the police,
then sexually assaulted inside the bathroom of a Brooklyn precinct
with the wooden handle of a broom.
I also take my place in line behind a Guinean immigrant,
hit by nineteen of forty-one bullets aimed at him as he retrieved his wallet from his pocket.
I take my place with every victim of racial, misogynist, religious intimidation.
My hands are up in supplication, not defiance.
I beseech you to see me and every soul that appears different from you
as more than just skin or vagina or Bible
until the day that color will be known in our collective bones,
ot as a lethal weapon I wear to dare you,
but as the pigment of our wisdom and lineage and humanity shared.