

2016

# Poem: Black Berry

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## Recommended Citation

Walker, Frank X. (2016) "Poem: Black Berry," *The Chautauqua Journal*: Vol. 1 , Article 12.  
Available at: <https://encompass.eku.edu/tcj/vol1/iss1/12>

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FRANK X WALKER

BLACK BERRY

*For Timothy Pigford*

If Wendell Berry was black and planting  
seeds, If Henry County was still in Virginia  
or Carolina, his Mad Farmer's Manifesto  
would have wrapped the good dishes  
for the move, after he left the farm

Of course, being a real farmer poet  
he would no more quit the land  
than the land would quit him, at first

he'd hire himself out, sharecrop  
somebody else's dreams, dig up their soil  
and plant his own ambitions  
deeper than the *cancer* of his skin

He'd water it with regret and longing  
until it petaled and bloomed, yielding  
a harvest of angry black letters and tears

If Wendell Berry was a mad black farmer  
his grandson would be standing here  
right now, telling you how the closest he  
ever got to farming was the liberation garden  
we planted on railroad property  
and the bean that finally broke ground  
in the chocolate milk carton in the fifth grade.