Legacy

Your young wife, my mother-to-be
doesn't want to shed her clothes
at your command.
She doesn't want
to step up out of the hull,
sit on the bowsprit like that,
her silky legs parted
around the jib stay.
Do it anyway,
you say in the high breeze,
your right hand angling the tiller
just so to fill the mainsail.
She does it.
She strips and goes forward,
naked into the wind.

New Bedford, 1972

There was the gift of olive rainboots
and the specter of prison.

Too small for Anthony, the boots.
On the front page, his two big brothers, their hands cuffed.

He brought the boots to school, stood them atop his desk.
The cops ushered his brothers down the courthouse steps.

Gray laces crisscrossed up the shins, even the soles scrubbed clean.
Pandemonium in the courtroom, the paper said.

I held them in my arms and the rubber squeaked.
Framed because they're Panthers, the crowd screamed.

I was white. He gave me boots, the news.
The Panthers served breakfast across the street from school.

I slipped them on, and he walked me home that afternoon.
Pasted below our fifth-grade window, Angela Davis's face.

Yellow ginkgo leaves buttered the sidewalk.
Her name scooped like a necklace below her chin.

She'll be released, he trumpeted as we walked.
The word *Free,* an arc above her head.