

SYLVIA HAMILTON

LABRADOR CHILD

Sylvia Hamilton (1950-) was born in Beechville, Nova Scotia. She first attended a local segregated school and then switched to a non-segregated high school outside her community. She earned a bachelor's degree from Acadia University in 1972. She then worked as a radio journalist and freelance broadcaster. In 1975 she joined Halifax's Reel Life Film and Video Collective, and she won the Kathleen Shannon Documentary Award for her first film, *Black Mother Black Daughter* (1989). In 1990 she co-founded the New Initiatives in Film program for the women's unit of the National Film Board, Studio D, and she won a Gemini Award for her second film, *Speak It! From the Heart of Black Nova Scotia* (1993). She then began publishing her poetry, and the following poem was published in the summer 1997 issue and included in the collection *And I Alone Escaped to Tell You* (2014), which was shortlisted for the Gerald Lampert Memorial Award and the J. M. Abraham Poetry Award.

Everyone join hands she said
He took her hand
looked at the palm,
the back and fingers.
Slowly, carefully
he began to rub.

His eyes looked ahead
fingers still rubbing
now, more vigorously.

He looked.
No change.

The smooth
brown colour
remained.

It's okay, she told him,
it won't come off—
it's supposed to be there.
I tried to rub it off too
one time, when I was young.