


rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.— That to secure these rights, the governed, — And whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to secure to them the greatest safety, Liberty and Peace. — But whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to secure to them the greatest safety, Liberty and Peace. — But whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to secure to them the greatest safety, Liberty and Peace.

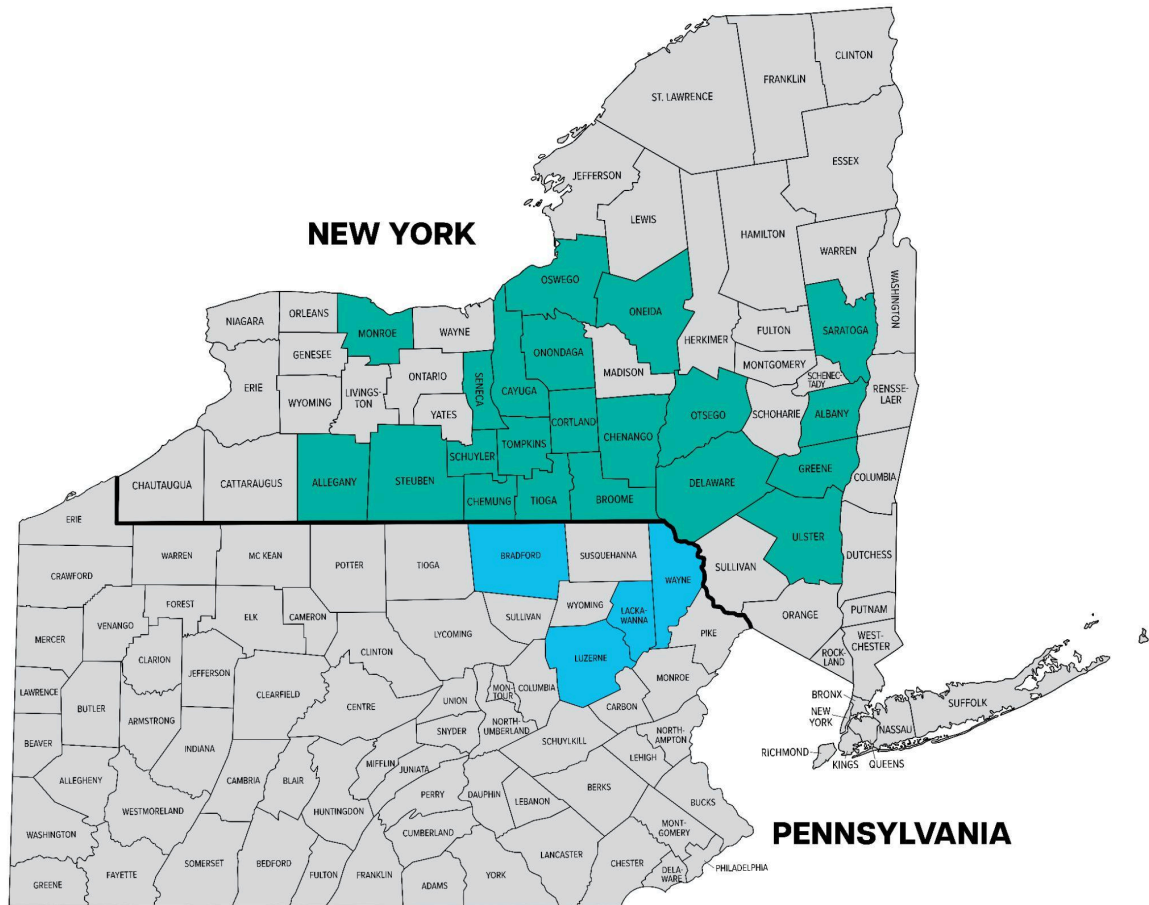
Past.

Present.

Possible.



**The
Revolution
WILL BE
POETICIZED**



In 2026, America marks the 250th anniversary of the United States Declaration of Independence. *The Revolution Will Be Poeticized* invited regional poets to reflect on America's past, examine the present, and imagine hopes for the next generation through their original work.

This open call reached poets across the Southern Tier and surrounding region, resulting in 163 submissions from 25 counties. Each poet was asked to respond to one or more of three guiding themes:

Looking Back: history, founding ideals, and untold stories

Right Now: modern America, democracy today, and lived experience

Looking Forward: hopes for future generations.

The poems gathered here reflect a wide range of voices and perspectives, offering an expansive portrait of a region in conversation with itself.

We have made every effort to preserve each poem's original formatting as submitted. However, variations in word processing and digital display may affect elements such as spacing, line breaks, and indentation.

Thank you to every poet who shared their work with us, and to the communities that continue to support and uplift creative expression across our region. This project was made possible with support from a grant provided by Public Broadcasting Service.

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Dependency

Scott Michael Anderson

American flags

wrap soldiers' coffins

like barcodes.

Thoughts, decisions –

like roadside bombs,

reality detonating.

Shrapnel of hatred implodes,

seemingly transmigration.

Faith a drug...

God, the addiction.

EXCISE

Ana Drake

And the girls perform in stadiums and bend backwards all for you
 As you go and worship words that sound like machines made them for you
 I will look for every format and chorus that you recognize
 To get up and sing together about the threats against mankind
 Cause If we don't excise the greed it will just grow and bleed us dry
 It's together or we perish
 And we're running out of time.//
 And forgive me if I'm using your chord structures and your verse
 Because I swear I had the concept before I knew yours was there
 But you popped up on my playlist and I listened and I cared
 And the loneliness of your muse fills my own songs with despair.
 And the chorus doesn't fit within my structure and that's fine,
 I started with your song but I believe this is now mine.
 I have gotten in a rhythm and now I can freely rhyme
 So I can comfortably tell you what I came to say this time.
 I unfollowed a "sacred smut" poet on Instagram the other day
 Because he glorifies addiction and sells it to you to pay the rent
 And Sabrina Carpenter is writing Tears with Jack and says that she gets wet
 At the thought of being treated right when she does nothing but her best.
 Because Music is the muse but artists treat her like a wench.
 Hook:
 And the girls perform in stadiums and bend backwards all for you
 As you go and worship words that sound like machines made them for you
 I will look for every format and hook that you recognize
 To get up and sing together about the threats against mankind
 If we don't excise the greed it will just grow up and bleed us dry
 It's together or we perish
 And we're running out of time

—

There's a cadence to this rhythm, won't you see it as a march
 Because we have to find the songs to rise to, and they have a head start.

And I wish I could sing inside your ear so that you could listen up
 Before they listened first and went to great lengths to shut me up.
 Because Everyone is singing how the women are discarded
 But the men are just as lonely and it's just, we are all retarded
 In the sense of being delayed, as in time and not in brain stuff,
 We get too late to the party and the bus has now departed,
 And the rooms are sitting empty and we're just not getting started.
 And the kids die starving and the bombs drop funded by our taxes.
 Because Music is the muse and it got stolen from the artists.
 And the girls perform in stadiums and bend backwards all for you
 As you go and worship words that sound machines made them for you
 I will look for every format and hook that you recognize
 To get up and sing together bout the threats against mankind
 If we don't excise the greed it will grow up and bleed us dry
 It's together or we perish
 And we're running out of time//
 Because you know what, we once threw Nixon out and you know what, they're quick studies.
 And they made sure to have excised all the places we can gather.
 Do you see how there are no Town squares now to speak of,
 and there's anti homeless architecture,
 parse it down on screens all different, keep us lonely and indifferent
 And now the kids of those who changed the world and made the leaders reconsider
 Play the jam bands with no lyrics cause the words get us deported
 we get too late to the parties and the Ubers left without us.
 We know music is the answer but we gotta keep the roof above us.
 Hook
 And the girls perform in stadiums and bend backwards all for you
 As you go and worship words that sound machines made them for you
 I will look for every format and hook that you recognize
 To get up and sing together bout the threats against mankind
 If we don't excise the greed it will just grow and bleed us dry
 It's together or we perish
 And we're running out of time
 And there are times in life you give too much
 And are met with nothing but disdain,
 So go ahead and offer dreams come true
 And then go watch them go down the drain,
 NOtice how they throw away the good because they don't believe in you

But also because they just don't believe in themselves.
And they go and preach in creedless churches
And praise the goodness of their lord
From their towers shielding patrons that starve children and fund wars.
As they use their feel-good music
To drown out our tears and crying,
They don't care what music does.
There's money to be made. Shut up. Why are you trying? //chorus

Be Not Afraid

Lisa Harris

~ a poetic interpretation to Mark 4:35-41
March 8, 2026~ Forest Home Chapel

Each of us has fallen
on the slippery kitchen floor,
off a bike, down a hill,
over a root, in the forest,
on a cracked sidewalk,
among the thistles,
in the soft green grass.

Be not afraid. Find light in darkness.

Each of us has risen—
early or late to tend to a child,
an elder, load a woodstove,
get to work. Sometimes
we are hopeful;
sometimes afraid.

Find light in darkness. Do not be afraid.

Find light in darkness.
Look at the ground—
See thistle strewn space
and sandy beaches.

Find light in darkness. Do not be afraid.

When the wind howls
and the sea sends crashing waters,
a holy spirit lifts us
so we can lift others—and we become
a power greater than wind,
greater than the sea,
greater than you or me.

Be not afraid. Find light in darkness.

We become search lights that illuminate
a path through darkness, despair,
lies, and greed. We look them in the face,
and we hear Jesus speak:
Why are you so fearful?
Why do you have no faith?

Find light in the darkness.

Seek and locate what illuminates
a path through darkness, despair,
lies, envy, and greed. Find power
greater than howling wind and screaming water.
Embrace the spirit that even
wind and water must obey.

Be not afraid.

Is It Bad Form to Recall the Bad?

Peter Fortunato

Shall we “move on” from the Big Lie about 2020
and the insurrection it invited in 2021,
as well as from his hush-money conviction in 2024?
Is D.J.T. to be free forever from any penalty
for any past action, and to be considered immune
from any possible future trespass, since as
the once-and-again President he must be allowed
to fulfill his office without the interference
of consequences for criminal activities?

Have I got that right?

Should we perhaps assume that
even before his first election,
all of his earlier activities are now to be viewed
as part of his eventual elevation, and therefore that
he is indemnified against all possible charges
for such things as mere income tax “irregularities”?

Have I at least got this part right:
he propositioned an adult film industry actor,
a woman with whom he’d become fascinated,
to have sexual intercourse with him,
and later, because he’d fixed his eye on
the booty which the Presidency promised,
engineered a pay-off scheme to Stormy Daniels
to insure she wouldn’t reveal their tryst
and spoil his run for the office before
he was elected in 2016.

In 2024 he was in fact convicted
by a jury of ordinary citizens to be guilty
on 34 felony counts pertaining to that mess.
Yet, it now seems he will never pay
for these crimes, as would an ordinary citizen,
because penalizing him would
interfere with, etcetera, etcetera.

Is it bad form to bring this up?

Or have we moved on in order to enjoy
peace and prosperity for all, now that
America has been made great again?

America

Bridget Meeds

America, I Saw You

America, I saw you leaping from the burning skyscraper, believing in your urgency that you would survive,

America, I saw you on the on-ramp, smiling with meth-brown teeth, holding a sign that said “homeless and pregnant please help,”

America, I saw you huddled in the belly of a Chinook, earbudded and solitary,

America, I saw you up at four a.m., ironing your blouse for work,

America, I saw you punching a stop sign, screaming in Chinese,

America, I saw you looking straight with seventeen pounds of pot hidden in your spare tire,

America, I saw you texting while driving,

America, I saw you bite your father in a fury,

America, I saw you put on ten pounds,

America, I saw you walk the winning run,

America, I saw you asking for an epidural,

America, I saw you raise your hand to strike your child,

America, I saw you eating roadkill woodchuck.

America, I saw you drinking a kamikaze by the hotel pool,

America, I saw you at the Super Great Wall buffet with blue swastikas tattooed on your neck and knuckles,

America, I saw you in your 87 Oldsmobile, wearing your best wig and sunglasses, God radio blaring,

America, I saw you in your private helicopter above Manhattan, doing mental arithmetic,

America, I saw you walking a dog who was wearing a Hello Kitty t-shirt,

America, I saw you waving a white linen napkin from a broken window in the burning skyscraper,

America, I saw you fall.

I Want to Live in an America Where

Richard Bracco

I want to live in an America where
citizens do not race past me on the highway
as if dissatisfied with their place in life.

I want to live where refrigerated bottles
open every morning without the locking pliers
I keep with doomsday supplies in the garage.

I wish that children in faraway places
should not have to wait for doctors to come
on a boat just to receive basic medical care.

Most fervently, I hope no one needs to die
while celebrating their coming of age
by using drugs or drinking for the first time.

I need to know that someone, somewhere,
is not stockpiling enriched uranium
to get back at the people who invented it.

And I need to know that my problems
are small when compared with others
who want to dream as I did when a child.

I want to live in a country where
I can find a parking space downtown
for the annual meeting on civic pride.

I want to live in a neighborhood
where windows are not broken
by little boys taunted by others.

I want to live in a country where
the longest lines at the food pantry
do not come on Thanksgiving Eve.

I need to know that coffee bean pickers
are getting at least some of the money
for my Chai Crème Frappuccino.

I want to believe that my jacket zipper
was not sewn by a 12-year old girl
hired because she had flexible fingers.

I want to believe that my body will decompose
despite decades of ingesting preservatives
designed to keep my lunchmeat tasting fresh.

I wish the post office charged less for a stamp
than the robot parking meter charges me
to run inside and have my taxes mailed on time .

I wish that people dying in remote countries
could live long enough to see officials counting
election day ballots instead of burning them .

I wish that carbon from the firewood
I have neatly stacked in my living room
is not the carbon that will kill the planet.

I hope that the undocumented worker
I have been paying to walk my dog
is not the one destabilizing our economy.

I hope my daughter will marry the bearded man
from the art gallery next to our fish market instead of
the clean-shaven biologist who designs killer viruses.

I hope my healthcare plan will pay for aspirin
if headaches return when I cannot remember
where I saved the AGI from last year's tax return.

I hope that my life does not depend on a tree
cut down last year in the Amazon to make room
for an endangered species monitoring station.

I pray that my ancient relatives in Sicily
who were burned by the erupting Mount Vesuvius
did not have their glassified brains sold on E-Bay.

I pray that all recycled polyethylene
it is not shipped east for dumping in the Yangtze
and eaten by the ersatz haddock that I had for lunch.

And finally, I fear what will happen to us
when our galaxy is swallowed by Andromeda
and know such far off things we barely now perceive.

Lincoln In Another Bardo

Mary Gilliland

If aluminum foil hadn't more glints
a crow would lift me up for nesting matter.
There's an off chance she might pilfer me for
crowning ornament: one less loose copper.

Copper I am, not iron, though a long ways
from the silver tongue of thy prophets.
I shine in the footsteps of passersby.
I shine small and round and presidential.

Do you see me slow to anger, gracious
and merciful, abiding in steadfast love?
You would seem to be addressing
old envelopes stamped with my visage.

Games and prizes, land and research
have waylaid your prodigal feet.
I don't want to hold you up. But I do.
The arc of history could bend with you.

...from the redwood forests

Susan D Eschbach

I belted that tune
 a chest full of pride and connection
 and deep belief in my land being your land.
 I knew how to share and I sang that promise around every campfire and classroom
 with my scout troop and
 in the family station wagon
 I believed it
 I loved it
 I was so sure it was true

As the stripes blurred and stars dimmed
 I understood
 painfully, angrily, sadly, over decades
 that the land
 had not been mine to start with
 was pillaged and raped and burned lynched jailed deported
 that the you and me weren't enough of a we
 and somewhere a significant they was clamoring to be in the song.
 Along that ribbon of highway
 I learned cynicism, skepticism, rage and activism

This morning I heard
 Sharon Jones and the DooWap Kings crooning
 the Gulf Stream waters
 and I heard her version a new way
 Then through some synchronistic design of the universe
 I heard Pete Seeger this afternoon and his golden valley
 rode within me
 and I sobbed for my nine year old heart so full of faith
 of an us and a we
 in that land of you and me and I realized why
 at 70, heartbroken, betrayed, and ever critical,
 I easily cry about that promise.
 Because somehow,
 from California to the New York Island
 I still believe it.

Semiquincentennial Composition of These United States

Samantha Terrell

We, the people of the United States of America,
members of an imperfect union,
held hostage by a hostile regime and her
complacent or self-serving compatriots,
denounce the present avarice and violence
unleashed on other nations (whether
former allies or enemies) and our own,
acknowledging this once great experiment
has turned from her true purpose – a
democracy representing the majority – to
a self-righteous, power-wielding minority
willing to dispose of human lives
under the auspices of 'common defence,'
degrading the general welfare, and
exploiting insecurities to strip us and others
of the Blessings of Liberty –
do heap disdain upon current affairs,
asserting our intent to serve love over fear,
overcoming the aforementioned injustices,
toppling false façades of grandeur, and
reinstating such national ambitions as
peace and prosperity for all.

AT OVID'S FEET

Suzie Downie

The fathers named Dunlap and Wilson
Had found their ways here from Ireland
Their two sons were soon also good friends
Their two cabins antagonized native born on frontier's bend
The upstarts assumed a defiant stance
They were ready to join the colonial resistance
The boys apprenticed with Militia blacksmiths
The Army and horses they left home to fight with
Shodding the shoes of both nags and steeds
Heating metal for bullets or rough wagon wheels
With sparks from anvils/steam from wood barrels
They trudged along on growing adolescent feet
Their own soles shredding with each fife and drum beat
These soldiers fought from the edge of "Penn's land" green
To the ancient place of the families Haudenosaunee
The youths now attached to John Sullivan's cruel campaign
These troops destroyed indigenous villages with Patriot flames
General Washington would accept no claims, plans, or treaties
The Past up in smoke shrouding former citizens fleeing
And promises were made to the Revolutionary youngsters
Return to Seneca Lake shores after war's fierce bluster
Pack your hopes and leave your former homes again
Bring parents, white wives, and children's children
Dig a plot and forget on what was then named Military Tract Land
Recite *Metamorphoses*—the poem in this new Ovid's soot-stained hand

1776/1976/2026

Lonna Pierce

Fifty years ago, the summer after college graduation, I crossed a style
 And ended up in a Welsh farmyard before a gloriously thatched barn.
 I admired its girth and sloping lines and asked the farmer how old it was.
 "It is two hundred years old," he smiled mildly.
 "Two hundred years old?!" I said, "That's how old my entire country is!"
 As I hiked solo in our bicentennial year, using Walking Tours of Great Britain as my guide,
 Again, I was reminded of the ancient European countries
 That sent their sons and daughters here, to a relatively young nation
 To make their fortunes and seek a better life.
 Surely my grandparents did this, escaping wars with age-old foes, famines, and fears.
 Speaking Russian, Polish, Ukrainian, and broken English;
 Doing back-breaking jobs no one else would do:
 In the mines, in the ditches, and the sweat shop cigar factories.
 When I was just a toddler, my grandmother put a pencil in my hand, and said:
 "That she would be a teacher!"
 And so I became one years later, and tried to inspire my young students
 With the courage, bravery, and the steadfast hard-working spirit of our forebears,
 That brought our young nation new blood, new hope, new customs.
 Teaching my 4th graders in 1976 about the heroes & heroines of our American Revolution:
 The Marquis de Lafayette, Sybil Ludington, Tadeusz Kosciuszko of 200 years ago,
 Building a whole new nation with their bare hands.
 "If you are descended from these immigrants who came," I said,
 "You, too have that same brave blood flowing in your veins,
 And you can also do more than you can ever think because of it."
 Their shining faces looking up at me in 1976 are but a memory now, as they mused about the legacy of their
 ancestors.
 Here it is fifty years later, now retired from that noble profession, and yet,
 I am still telling the stories,
 I am still writing the poems,
 I am still sharing the history
 Of how we became that richly multi-lingual, multi-cultural nation such a short time ago.
 And how America, 250 years later, still reaches out to those who dream around the world
 Of a better, blessed place, where they, too can find a home.

SYNECDOCHE AND ITS DISCONTENTS

(for Matthew Lippman)

David Weiss

With each day the world as I've known it
grows more unknown

Every day I mistake some small part of it
for the whole

as if a small act of kindness stood for human nature
as if the vast awakened

underground rivers of Greenland
letting themselves like blood into the North Atlantic

said it all or
as if cultural changes in the baking of bread in Lebanon did

or the catacombs of the Medicare system I've now entered
said it

Today the whole was summed up by a boy
so young

that it's as if just yesterday he hadn't yet begun
to exist

who loves to break eggs
and help make pancakes and yet

go figure
refuses even so much as to taste them

And then there's kissing
that awkward dazzling and chancy thing

which I think about more often than
I receive or give

which feels like a part
that's no less than the whole

shebang
part and world remaking each other

Every day I mistake and have mistaken this world
for a place

that I am inseparable from
until

with an edict or insult or a kick in the teeth
you are made to feel

no longer even the least part of it
your world made foreign

and you fleeing it a foreigner
hounded and unprotected over the face

of the earth maybe pulled from a sea
made colder by the bleeding waters of Greenland

to seek a refugee now refuge
and maybe to receive it and maybe one day

as a result
to be able to offer it to others

which like a kiss
would mean the world

The Reawakening

Stephanie McGinn

Time is short as I lie
Here, a tear falling at some
Off-kilter angle against
The plane of persistent
Sameness. Here, where I
Jettisoned myself deep
Into the folds of a
Forgotten place where no one
Wants to go, and think
And remember and
Realize how you
Destroyed my life.
I am reawakening.
Every surface sings.
I hear millennia
In the bird's cry,
See the creamy blue of
The innocent sky,
The speckled breast of a wood thrush.
The toads chortle in the underbrush.
Whole decades emit their
Mournful sour,
Their tipsy sweet.
The same rebellion here as
The same rebellion there.
The pain of oppression
And the triumph of revolution
Like the gentle suction of
A tidal pool wave, the choral
Wailing, the glib crooning
That pulls and draws one under
And inside the soul, to
Soulful hurt, a contorted grimace,
Then comes the release.

Every atom of every incidence
Of my occurrence screams
An unheard song from a muted
Mirror, chipped, dusty, broken,
The almost black that is my life.

My body, my mind at the helm of the present.
 The end is always against me, as I manifest.
 I am expanding beyond
 And as far as infinity, and
 My heart, in paroxysms,
 Collapses into liberation.
 I'm reaching, reaching out
 To the farthest edges of my being.
 Pulling at the edges; the earth spins
 Within a round hall of white
 Light, and I can see out and all
 The way through now, a window
 To pure being.
 I am transparent, a picture
 Of light and color, my existence a
 Speedy flame, flying through the universe.
 There is more, there is bigger,
 Bigger than almost anyone can know.
 Just a teeny, tiny glimpse I saw, and in my
 Soul, hope arises and faces my
 Reflection once again. It spurs
 A trace, a path I must follow,
 This time reawakened.

Now smelling the smoke of
 Extinguished fires, the charred remains of my mistakes
 And my misjudgements, my embarrassments
 And my missteps, my ignorance
 And my folly; my dismemberment.
 I greet teeth with tongue
 Feeling the mouth of the
 Ape that I must be;
 A she-ape girl, a woman, an animal,
 A being, a strange and delicate creature
 In this place
 Of incomprehensible beauty
 And undividable magnificence.
 Our earth, our home...
 What is all this stuff?
 Laughing aloud, suddenly aware
 Of it being there at all.
 A first unexpected
 Awakening was 27
 Years ago, 27 centuries

Ago, milky blue sky.
 Spiritual sky 27 thousand
 Years ago, chariots
 In flight, the chimes of
 Beneficence ringing through
 And down to earth like columns of tidings.
 Reach, reach for the nearest
 Rope, reach up high;
 There is a crest, an open door
 To discovery, to revival.

The blinks, pings, and buzzes of every 1980's tv show
 Can finally evaporate into an insignificant, effervescent fizz.
 The bells and whistles of every 1990's house flip, a promise
 Disemboweled by unbridled capitalism's
 Secret, illicit swords
 That carve out the soft white
 Underbelly and the generationally
 Traumatized soap-bubble dream.
 America, dysfunctionally
 Traumatized in a
 Pension-grabbing gut bust
 Of hedgehogs, pulsing little
 Conniving minds. America
 Craves, but to reconcile:
 Suburban sprawl with First
 Nation, urban blight with
 Gated association.
 And the hardest of all:
 The broadband of our Founding
 Fathers' reasoned
 Argument for a land
 Of free peoples. Its tenets,
 Tangled in a profound dive,
 While those who make
 The sacrifice-whether in the
 Wars or on the streets- are pushed into
 A face-off of interpretation.
 We strive to understand each other.
 But how can we
 Until the swords of greed withdraw
 From driving us apart
 And making us bleed
 In blues and blacks, in reds and greens

Incisions

In the soul's search for freedom.

On Anger

Cory Brown

William Least Heat-Moon in his classic travel book, *Blue Highways*, describes a visit to a Trappist monastery in Georgia where one of the monks explains to him that of the seventeen hours the monks are awake four are spent on the manual labor required of their products—cattle, stained glass windows, bread, hay—and the rest on the real work of their lives, reflection. Heat-Moon notes their equanimity, particularly the older monks. I'm remembering last summer a strange dog off leash pooping in the yard next door, a public space, its owner nowhere to be seen. I'd seen the dog before, belonged to a worker who was part of a nearby crew and I knew he'd been keeping the dog in his truck. I walked to the edge of the yard and yelled to the men sitting on the curb to come pick up their dog's shit. What I remember most is how angry I was. Why? Did I want the worker to keep his dog at home all day? A therapist once told me anger is usually a secondary emotion. Sometimes primary, directed for example at the driver of a car you're in who's driving recklessly, but usually it stands in for another emotion, sadness. There's another function it sometimes serves, and that would be to control people. Authoritarians often sound angry when they talk about policies or people they oppose. Especially people—disparaging them in ways that seem crude or, more precisely, incommensurate with the nature of the opposition. That seems to me a tell, that the anger's not real, but an effort to control others, or themselves, out of frustration or fear, expressed in a way they know is generally acceptable to others, especially perhaps for men, at least in this culture. Why? And why anger? To attain or maintain their power, of course, and because it so often works. Many people respond to it in ways that benefit the manipulator, either from a fear that resembles what they experienced as a child perhaps—triggering them in a way that ironically provides the comfort of familiarity—or out of admiration for what they take to be the person's fortitude, perceiving the emotion

as a sign the person is bold, forceful, can tell it like it is, knows what's what, brave, a person of action and strong feeling, has a powerful belief in the righteousness of their own abilities and beliefs, a leader of true vision alive to the world in ways the listener, the target of the manipulation, doesn't recognize in themselves.

Is anger then a warranted emotion to fire back at the demagogue, a primary emotion—again, from fear perhaps, sensing a threat, like the response to the person driving recklessly? Does equanimity then become merely the refuge of thoughtless denial, of the cowardly, as some say of pacifism when justice and well-being are threatened? What would the monks say? What should be the object of my reflection when my house is on fire.

Choices

Jeri Wall

Look around.

Watch wide-eyed as warped humans flail,
spew wrath,
assume power,
attempt to strangle all possibilities.

See hope teetering on the precipice.

No!

Stand fierce.

Breathe deep.

Be with the trees and the sky.

Recall the ancestors.

Make eye contact.

Touch heart.

Wrap your arms around hope.

Push forward with the tenacity rooted deep in your soul.

Persevere.

One Nation Under

Domonica Geist

Semiquincentennial in who do “We The People” trust,
when the people in power lust?

Semiquincentennial what do we see as just,
if our morality as a nation is mussed.

Semiquincentennial why all the fuss,
it feels like we are about to bust.

“We The People” do not trust,
those in power to be just,
not to make our nation bust,
and turn us all into dust.

KINDERGARTEN PLAY

Howard Nelson

“The Three Billy Goats Gruff.”

Great story. Wonderful plot.

Spun on three wheels of repetition, in the ancient fashion.

Limited number of characters,

but the teacher, in her resourcefulness—

do they teach that when you get a degree in education?—

has solved the problem, forming four small groups,

one for each goat, one for the troll,

plus one brave kid as narrator.

The troll a role I played,

in the second grade.

I played it alone.

Not sure what my teacher did with the extra kids,

of which there must have been at least twenty,

in those baby boom days of the 1950s.

Maybe she created a Greek chorus

that could accommodate them all.

I can’t remember. But I know

there was only one troll, and that was me,

standing in the middle of the stage, with a paper bag

over my head, and another paper bag head on either side,

trolls being three-headed creatures.

And I sang a song

I have remembered ever since:

“I’m a troll, fal-de-roll,

I’m a troll, fal-de-roll,

I’m a troll, fal-de-roll,

and I will eat you for supper!”

I sang it to each of the goats,

until the third, the big one, came at me

and knocked me off the imaginary bridge.

I don’t know why the teacher chose me.

Did she think I had talent?

Or just that I was a cooperative, not to say compliant,

little kid? Anyway, it was the most important role

I ever had in a play in my entire life.

But this is not about me.

Not about the play that took place in the All-Purpose Room of Berkeley Avenue School in Westwood, New Jersey, in 1955. This is about the production on the playground of Fall Creek Elementary School, in Ithaca, New York, in 2023. A cool and sunny May day.

The little kindergarten kids performing it so well.

Clearly they have practiced a lot.

They know their lines, though here and there one looks at the next kid to make sure that they are supposed to be speaking or singing.

The goats, in their groups of three or four, wear horns they made themselves out of thick paper. They arrive in turn and cross the bridge, and the troll, who in this version is three kids wearing orange wigs, accosts them, until the big Billy Goat Gruff knocks them all off the bridge, the fall performed with various acrobatic flourishes. This is theater, and the kids are enjoying it, playing their parts with earnestness and gusto.

The parents and grandparents are enjoying it too, though “enjoying” doesn’t really describe what one feels while watching children who you think of as yours, along with their peers, doing so well—it can bring tears to your eyes.

But the play doesn’t end in the traditional way. The teacher has written a new ending. When the goats arrive safely in the meadow, they feel a little guilty, and they start to feel compassion for the troll. They go back, and ask the troll, that is, the group of kids playing the troll, how they’re doing, and the troll kids say, more or less in unison,

“I feel terrible! That always happens to me.
Thanks for asking. This is the best day of my life!”

So the goats take the troll-kids with them
up into the meadows of the risers,
where the entire class lines up, and the music teacher
comes and stands beside them with his guitar,
and they sing “Bridge over Troubled Waters,”
in as moving a rendition as you are ever
likely to hear. They sing loud, they almost shout,
and when they finish, there is much applause.
They bow. Their teacher, who has been standing
in front of them silently directing, steps up
and turns to us, and sweeps her arm toward them.
They look out at us. They look pleased
with themselves. As they should be—
as cool sunny May morning slips spills sparkling
into kindergarten eternity.

A Nation of Survivors

Wesley Smith

Humanity was born in a blender
A cacophony of slaughter
The most delicious celestial soup
Gangs of great apes fighting and dying
For one bloody niche or another
A circle of fists hammering our cousin's corpse
Deep in our bones we know the truth in violence
That without it we likely would not be here.
Maybe others still would...

And from this truth we made a nation
Indivisible under penalty of War
With freedom for those with money
Money that bought people, and guns,
And all of it
the screaming, the owning, the flags
pressed flat under the indifferent weight of distance
Stars that will not mourn us
Space that was here before the words to describe it
And we knew. We always knew.
And built anyway.

For this is our land! So they said.
Again and again and again.
Until we grew so old and frail and fat
Thinking only nuclear fire could protect us from retribution
Sat atop our hordes
Helpless but still, impossibly, hopeful.
We have seen a thousand apocalypses.
The world has ended thousands of times over
And that is exactly why we are here
Because the old world ended.
Each of us forged in that bloody furnace
Ready to rise again

Abe Lincoln Summons the Great Poets

Fran Markover

He's a *walking shadow*, a tired woodsman who paces,
moonlight ghosting the floor. Is that knocking he hears a dirge?

A conspiracy of ravens in the forest? Should he reread
the worn classics inhabited with lords and kings suffering

from forebodings like his. Shakespeare is a comfort
at day's end— *Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care*,

the death of each day's life. Perhaps he'll grasp a pen, quill
a poem of his own he might post for the local paper.

He'll omit his signature— *Abraham Lincoln*. Leave celebrity
for the great ones— Burns, Shakespeare, Thomas Gray.

Tonight, he'll invoke Poe. Stay cabined as rain taps against
windows like grim ancient birds. *Nevermore*, dear mother

Nancy, lady love Anne. *Nevermore*, baby brother he never
held. *Nevermore*, militia men he captained in the wilderness,

apparitions of soldiers he buried, bedeviling him evenings
the poet-politician seeks respite. Tomorrow, chores— split rails,

feed pigs and chickens, hunt for votes along campaign trails.
What can he offer? A poor man's bounty of melancholy?

How to wrest *better angels* harbored within? He wonders—
how do his companions Lear, Hamlet, Macbeth conquer

their demons that ruin repose? Questions that complicate
any ideals a leader might carry. Yes, tomorrow, he'll attend to

burdens of humble work, recite morning blessings. Weary,
he closes his book on the table. *Aesop's Fables*. Morals

to emulate, he thinks. Yawns as he angles his tall frame into bed.
Blows out his brief candle.

Untitled

Robert D White

Ken Burns,

Historian,

Iconic filmmaker,

Tells our history, warts and all.

Honor!

Red, white

and feeling Blue.

The center may not hold,

no great power lasts forever.

Good luck ...

Dear Nation

Jon Raimon

Dear Nation, dear heart-
 break, dear not hope-
 less yet. My advice may be
 meager, yet and yet
 not done, not dumb: it
 begins here, in this
 diner, weak-
 ish coffee, grease
 and eggs (god, don't
 say eggs), and it begins with
 saying clearly, saying
 to someone next to
 you, someone who
 scares you, some-
 one dangerous
 in your mind: saying
 I am human
 there is so much to me.
 I want you to know me
 I want to know you
 and there is the how,
 the howl, the how
 do we do that when our
 Lives are under threat?
 In this choke
 hold, our true history
 gasping.
 How would my
 trans students do that?
 Or my daughter, who dons
 queerness like a victory shawl?
 Or the Black men in my family? Or
 all the women, strong and struggling?
 These bullies and bigots puffed up, emboldened,
 an ugly glee. So how do we talk to some-
 one who scares us? Who we scare?
 What if
 we write each other.
 No.
 What if we bring our pets with us?

Share a meal, fries, maybe
gravy? Come with our grand-
parents who hate it when anyone
is rude? What if we promise to just
listen? Or make tea first? What if we
look at the moon while we talk or what if
name three things we are grateful for,
and I imagine some of those things will be
the same? Kids. There's always kids. We are
share that.

Broken kids. Kids wanting some joy, some-
where to be. What if we build something for
someone in need? Sing a classic
rock song while we do it. A bad one. I need to know you
are not (just) a monster. You need to know I am
not (just) some a-hole who thinks you're
trash. Meet me for coffee. Right here, if this is
good for you. The first cup is on me.

Eight Ways of Looking at Climate Change

Judy Swann

1. Unlinked

In the disappointments of youth: bitterness, rage.
After time and conformity, they pass for humor.

1. Literal

You have commandments against adultery and desire
but nothing is said about rape.

3. Listen

The American century is over.
My belly rises and falls all day.

4. Rider

When the moon's lamp goes out
black snow crunches under fat tires.

5. Gray

Twenty of us in the train station doing tai chi.
Come night time, twenty different snores.

6. Alarm

Woodpecker hammers the pignut tree.
In its death, a home to grubs.

7. Cruelty

The wounded man turns ugly in his dominance.
I remember with shame my old diary.

8. Suffering

I am one of six sisters, yet not
able to convince any one of them to give up her car.

The True America

Aniya Peavy

The world is cruel, but we know the truth.

Day by day, we stand tall while they push us down.

The world isn't what it used to be, it gets complicated

Day by day.

As we see conflict start to rise, upcoming wars, immigration issues

And unfair justice.

Red and blue start to separate, we stop seeing the world

In shades of gray, opinions directed by the government, ideas spread by the President.

250 years as a country, and we still can't get along.

Citizenship Test

Eric Machan Howd

*“If destruction be our lot we must ourselves be its author and finisher.”
Abraham Lincoln, from The Lyceum Address*

What is the supreme law of the land?

Stop signs can be stolen by frat boys.

What is one reason colonists came to America?

To escape their previous America.

Name one problem that led to the Civil War.

Narcolepsy under Old Glory.

What do we show loyalty to when we say the Pledge of Allegiance?

Bloody stripes wavering over town squares.

Name one right only for United States citizens.

The right to remain indifferent.

Who is the highest court in the United States?

A dead cardinal bleeding on the marble base.

What is the name of the President of the United States now?

“Absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

If both the President and the Vice President can no longer serve, who becomes President?

The eagle has yet to find them.

The idea of self-government is in the first three words of the Constitution. What are these words?

We the privileged.

Where I Stood

Josh Perry

I wore the uniform
but I never left home the way people think
Part-time Soldier
one foot in the world
one foot ready when it breaks
I had already been in
three years
when the towers fell
and something in me stood up
and never really sat back down
I crossed oceans
but not into war
training grounds instead of battlefields
still
you learn what it means
to carry weight
years later
the water came
Broome County
two thousand six
then again in two thousand eleven
same river
different destruction
we did not fight an enemy
we stood in the aftermath
clean up
security
long days that blurred together
and nights
watching homes
whole homes
break loose
and drift down a raging river
in the dark
and all you could do
was stand there
and witness
someone's life
being carried away

Hurricane Sandy
New York City underwater
the Rockaways torn apart
different place
same mission
show up
stand in the gap
when everything else gives way
again
and again
and again

no combat patch
no headline
just presence
just staying
and somewhere along the way
the questions came
where do I fit
in a story that measures service
by distance
what do you call this
when it happens at home
and what do you do
when the fight follows you
after the uniform is gone
because it did
quiet at first
then louder
until carrying it alone
was no longer a choice
I fought to be recognized
not for glory
not for medals
just to be seen

but when the weight showed
the system did not know
how to hold me
and I learned
what it feels like
to be set aside
not in war
but at the curb

uniform folded away
like the story was over
but it was not
because what you carry
does not leave
it becomes part of you

America

I have seen you underwater
I have seen you in the dark
and I have seen what rises after
neighbors becoming lifelines
people holding each other up
when there is nothing left to stand on
that is where I stood
not in combat
but in consequence
not far away
but right here
and I am still standing
because service is not where you go
it is whether you show up
when everything falls apart

and on this day
when we celebrate what this country is
I stand as proof
that it is not held together
by perfect stories
but by people
who stay
who carry
who rebuild
and who refuse
to let it fall

America is Turning on Itself

James Tully, aka Illuminated Warrior

The powers that be are turning Americans
against each other
With lies causing a major divide
We as Americans need to be aware
We are being played.
We need to stand together, rather than being
divided.
We need to bring the fight
For what is right for all of us
All the noise and the fighting
We need to see that it's all a distraction
Designed to keep us from seeing our shared
interests.
Those in power deliberately create a
smokescreen
To keep us divided.

The Old “Johnny Appleseed”

Kidd Williams

Before he went to work he went through the motions, he cinched his pants with the finest rope, he did his chores, cleared his debts, settled scores. He listened to advice from many sides, wrote it down, mailed it to the world.

He set out in the morning, excited as childhood. Over the lands, people grew his name in windowboxes. He would arrive in a town with crowds cheering, and the longer he stayed, the more he forgot.

Every time he saw what he'd done wrong (always long overdue) people became free. When he stretched his arms, everyone knew admiration. He laughed with his whole face, and his sheltered lusts made jackals blush.

Gradually, his clothes became worn, and replaced. He suffered heartburn, grew fat and deaf. Rodents took over his attic, and his good name stopped going ahead of him, his promises seldom caught up to again. Soon,

there was nothing more than his old name traveling.
You know it: “America.”

Cooperation

Jerry Mirskin

As if behind a screen,
firm, resolved, knowing, or not,
there is great cooperation.
Look at the workers over there,
how they stand and look away, courteously
cupping their cigarettes, combing their hair
that has become wet in the rain.
Or how the young rabbi
explains the Hebrew word for cemetery
means “house of worlds.”
And a city of stones crops up, sentient and oblique.
The last thing she said to me was, “live.”
She said it three times.
She was my beginning in America.
The fur of her coat. The kisses kissed.
Hands waving over candles on the stove.
I need one life to live, and one to be nostalgic.
Nostalgic for the crumbs of her semi-sweet cookies.
For the tone of pogrom
that was always in her voice.
Live, she said, sitting in a wheelchair
outside her building in the Bronx.
Her blue eyes neither sea nor sky.
The rabbi beckons us
to come forward, to take part, take shovel.
For real, he says, not symbolic.
My grandmother’s words board a train, then a ship.
They take passage for a time on the infinity of waves.
When they arrive they fill out forms.
Listen, what I’m trying to say
is she did not tell me to be happy, or gentle,

or loving, or good.

Burying, the rabbi said,

is one of the most loving things you can do for another.

This was his blessing.

Live, she said, live. Giving me her blessing, live,

whole and undivided.

In most cases I would stop here, just telling it like it is.

But I had further to go.

I climbed onto the pile of earth, the soil,

the original body of the world, and started shoveling.

My wedding shoes sinking into the loose dirt.

There was great cooperation.

Read It Again

Liam Rogers

All but the banana in the socket
 Found a rocket in my pocket
 In the season
 In the twitch
 In the golden cafeteria
 Through the unobstructed kaleidoscope
 with a half-baked cellophane lid
 that fires abruptly indifferent
 so the moon won't burn
 or the seven deadly moments
 that can see and envision and rise
 to sear sixteen seals on an aircraft
 four thousand miles away

It makes me think of my father
 I re-read his eulogy
 written by me
 my best work
 and I relive it all again
 believe the times
 and forget the rhymes
 and reflect on the consistency of vibrating rhythms

and it still makes my head spiral
 with off beat drums
 there it is
 can my clitoris safely hang
 down between my legs
 can I simply ask over anything else
 how was your day?

some of the words
 in perfect harmony
 together with a steel post
 now my mind circles
 adrift
 And it's
 odd
 the way the thumb nail curves up
 Sticks out from its base

and marries whoever will bite her
until she bleeds

It feels
Feels
Brisk

An impromptu workshop
At the house of an English tutor
Just because I saw you steal that book
Doesn't mean I would ever tell anyone
I wouldn't
I wouldn't

Magic cannabis in makeshift bongs
Smoke pouring from the cracks
in partially crushed tropical cans
while they serenade me in plush green velvet panties
the curvature of the moldy,
glossed over and whitened mahogany beams
that support and own
And worship
And...
They are Beams
Let them beam

And a severed toe
That appeared on my doorstep
More later
Or you, what a fake
understanding

A town that never reads
And a fear that never hides
Never bridges
Never far
Never high enough
for the wind to stop moving the treetop
back and forth
back and forth
until it stops
just stops
Making changes
For the sake of amateur reflection

Sitting in writing class
Sorry it makes no sense to you
why I'm always stoned when I write
And intensely observe
how it all ties together,

intricately wound around a pivotal lens
In a never-ending pleasure
path of tires and loops and twists
Permanently sealed in a knot
like cauliflower ear
And intimately clogged within
six feet of lottery winnings.

I look at the time
and all perspectives change
Will someone be mad at me
and have things to say
and again block me from writing
or creating
or salvaging the waste pot
or the double-sided dildo
or the green cheese that started out yellow
or the shiny golden cat
that always stares at me from the mantel
or the desk that fell apart
while I was still using it

I always think about it
I always reflect and show remorse
What if
All along
what if
it was the weakness of the knot

We Work and Wait

Joanne Corey

Remember the ladies, Abigail
wrote John before the Declaration
but after Sojourner, Elizabeth, Susan
and their sisters of the First Wave
Betty, Gloria, Angela
and their sisters of the Second Wave
Judith, Rebecca, Amy
and their sisters of the Third Wave
Tarana, Wendy, Jessica
and their siblings of the Fourth Wave
and the passage of 250 years
women still work toward
their full independence.

When Shirley ran in '72
my girl-self thought *soon*
but as Wave after Wave
crashed against that
highest, hardest glass ceiling
it inexplicably held.
Will it be my daughters
or my granddaughters
who see the First Ms.
President, the Second
Third, Fourth? So many
they don't think
to keep count.

Note: People referenced in this poem in order of appearance: Abigail Adams, John Adams, Sojourner Truth, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, Angela Davis, Judith Butler, Rebecca Walker, Amy Richards, Tarana Burke, Wendy Davis, Jessica Valenti, Shirley Chisholm. Quote from Hillary Rodham Clinton's 2016 concession speech.

GETTYSBURG MEMORIES

Barbara Swan

A forest dense, wooded, trees dry and broken on the
leaf-scattered floor,
Silence, birds sing, wings flutter, but no other sound
to break the spell.

But is it really the quiet that makes one question his
senses?

The history, the pain, suffering long ago endured,
don't you feel it?

Men, lying prone on this very spot, the ground
beneath your feet, absorbing the lifeblood of who
knows how many.

And we ask why? We who have our own cause, our
own drums to beat.

They too, had a cause, right or wrong, it was THEIR
cause, and a feverent belief that was strong enough
to die for. Would we do that?

If one listens with his emotions, and tunes into what
happened there, the silence is broken, the smoke,
the sights and sounds of battle can be brought back
to us in terror filled dreams.

A fallen brother, gun in hand can be imagined lying
with the picture of a wife or sweetheart clutched to
his slowly beating heart.

A shout, an order given, the troops move on to yet
another skirmish, leaving behind, broken pieces of
this very forest, still standing as a monument to those
who believed.

And now as we stand in these time-endured
battlefields, nothing has changed. We feel the
sorrow for those young souls too soon released to
the unknown, but also, we feel something else. Is it
just the silence that invades our minds with these long forgotten
visions of battle and death? Or are we
being reminded by the spirit of those champions of
their cause, not to forget that they fought and died
here and to remember also the commitment that
brought them to this spot in the first place.

So we turn, walk away out of the trance like spell, and
when it is broken, we shake ourselves free and ask
was I there? did I feel those things? It was a

memory, but who's memory was it?

As we celebrate our freedom as a nation, we should reflect on the obstacles that we endured to bring us to this time in our history, we are still doing battles in one form or another, but we are strong, we are resilient .. we are America!

A Desire Called America

G. E. Schwartz

A nation dreams itself—yet trembles in the claim,
Exceptional in light, yet shadowed by its name;
Its letters burn with hope, then turn that hope aside,
Where longing writes the law that law cannot abide.
One voice proclaims the body vast, a common sea;
Another seals infinity in privacy;
One fractures speech where power scripts the hidden will;
One charts the webs where systems tighten, subtle, still.

Between acclaim and doubt—an interval unnamed—
Desire unsettles both the lauded and the blamed;
Here critique cleaves to love, complicity to loss,
And bodies figure worlds ungoverned by the cross.
So history bends through flesh toward forms not yet possessed:
 A commons dreamed in text, by no one owned—*yet blessed*.

Two Revolutionary Haikus

Eileen Mae Patch

Abigail Adams

Said, "Remember the ladies."

Now women may vote.

Equality soon.

Equal pay for the same work.

Equality now.

1982

Jessica Macaluso

My heart weeps,
 for my land
 for your land, this is our land.
 Red, white and blue
 star spangled banner
 Oh, child its not a Trump flag.
 It is our Flag. The flag stands for freedom.
 Its okay to stand. Stand Glorious- Sing with me,
 "My country 'Tis Of Thee."

Blue tears burn
 red blooded, resilient
 Aren't we all, red blooded?
 American soil
 Earth belongs to no one.
 Patriotic
 Red blooded American girl
 I am brave
 freedom will prevail.
 I love this land in spite of he
 Orange and gold not like the sun
 not much of a man
 He will descend
 with an unsightly stumble a smudge in the archives
 History will remember him
 as inadequate
 a thief who tried to steal our freedom,
 a con
 no he has not won.
 Remember my child we love the USA.

Untitled

Carly Shaffer

At the sunset of the free world

Was supposed to be a beautiful Movement

And a shining ovation- not a down movement for our women's rights

And rights in the first time, we had a free world

It was like a pointing

No more women having problems with their rights and no more worrying about freedom from rights

We are our own people to make something better

Why do we go back to the past when we should be in an even better picture for our country?

Our people? And our lives?

Privilege, Annotated win

Ryan Wagnecz

In the library I sit, dusting books, shelves,
and every minute an email chimes:
“Breaking News!”
A book about brotherhood seals the gapped shelf,
America bombs a country for “national security”
A cleared bookcase stares, books lying in wait,
ICE clears neighborhoods, people disappear
Dust is blown and dispersed as snow in the air,
Ashes of families rain down like acid on those left.
A detonation of noise from a book bowing out startles,
A gun shot- no, three- swallows Good souls.

“A curse,” one book synopsis starts,
and I can’t help but think:
we have sowed the seeds of curses already,
and they’ve sprouted into deathly old growth forests,
trees sturdy enough for Strange Fruit,
even though it’s 2026 and
“Racism is over”
because white folks don’t care to see past
white picket fences and 60 hour work weeks.
For them, the trees have been cut down,
the paper was made,
“It’s in the past!” they say,
willfully ignorant to the forests
they flattened into chapters.

A world of books in the library is contained, small,
but the guilt stacks each time I scroll,
or watch the Pentagon wrap a chain around Death’s throat
to use as their lapdog,
the helplessness that becomes the marrow of my bones
and shrieks at me to “Just do something!”--
isn’t anything close to the pain
that consumed our lands and generations
of people– children– who ignore
a mother’s promise of their belonging in favor
of the cloak of white harmony
or risk the end of a rope.

How can I rip each root of hate
from ground congealed with ashes, blood, tears-
tainted from the start when each white man
who sailed the wide ocean blue,
casted a searing, white hot shadow
of plague and blight over it all,
so that each time my shovel of progress
strikes the hollowed earth
it shatters like glass,
only shards piercing through?
How can I ever begin to try,
when tendrils of those roots strangle me,
connecting me to a lineage I don't recognize,
irredeemable,
forcing me to step on a premade podium labelled:
"Whites only"?

For now I sit in the library,
complacent,
letting my guilt boil into rage,
allowing hopelessness to puppeteer my bones
and turn me towards a new purpose—
One in which I can plant
new seeds of the future;
One in which I can lay my body out
as a shield,
protection from the damned,
trying to redeem the curse
that was sewn into my skin,
predestined.
Destiny couldn't have predicted this.

The Revolution: Past, Present, Possible

Edmond Overby

Before on the Fourth when it was read aloud,
The Declaration passed through careful, shaping hands;
Thomas Jefferson wrote while John Adams stood near,
And Benjamin Franklin lent wit to steady plans.

Before them stirred John Locke's measured thought,
Of rights no king could justly take away;
While Thomas Paine's urgent pen lit fire,
That burned through night to kindle day.

At Siege of Yorktown the trenches carved the ground,
Where Charles Cornwallis bowed to fate's demand;
And French designs with iron will prevailed,
Till freedom's cause took root across the land.

The Treaty of Paris sealed the newborn nation's claim,
And opened northern seas to toil and trade;
Yet loose the bonds beneath Articles of Confederation lay,
Till firmer union in convention made.

In hall where Montesquieu's spirit lingered still,
They balanced power with a cautious art;
And United States Constitution rose from ink and will,
With checks to bind ambition's restless heart.

"Publius" spoke in essays keen and long—
Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, John Jay combined—
To urge the states toward one enduring frame,
A federal vision disciplined and signed.

Then George Washington stood, reluctant, called to lead,
A father crowned by duty, not by birth;
With Adams next, and rivalries that grew,
As Thomas Jefferson dreamed an agrarian earth.

And Alexander Hamilton forged a system bold with banks,
While factions hardened, sharpening the divide;
Till Jefferson ascended by the vote,
And former friends let distance be their guide.

When James Madison faced the flames of War of 1812,
 The White House burned beneath a foreign hand;
 While Dolley Madison held court with grace and charm,
 A republic learning how to stand.

Through James Monroe's age the plow and chain prevailed,
 An empire fed by bondage, stark and grim;
 Till "all men equal" split the nation's soul,
 And war's dark tide rose to the brim.

The American Civil War tore the country into halves,
 Where Robert E. Lee met Ulysses S. Grant in the end;
 At Appomattox Court House swords were laid to rest,
 And brother's war found mercy in a friend.

Abraham Lincoln dreamed a freer, reborn land,
 But fell before the healing could begin;
 And Andrew Johnson bore the fractured weight,
 Where hope and failure wrestled deep within.

Through scandal's haze Ulysses S. Grant still endured,
 While industry spread power's reach afar;
 And Benjamin Harrison looked to steam and seas,
 Extending lines of fuel and distant star.

Then Theodore Roosevelt strode with restless force,
 Set parks aside and split his party's frame;
 As World War I drew the nation forth,
 To test its youth in iron, fire, and flame.

The Twenties roared, then fell in sudden hush—
 Wall Street Crash of 1929 closed the gilded door;
 Till Franklin D. Roosevelt calmed the fearful crowd,
 And led through war to steadier shore.

Then Harry S. Truman chose the atom's dreadful end,
 At Hiroshima and Nagasaki fire fell from sky;
 While Dwight D. Eisenhower mapped the roads of steel,
 And Cold War shadows lengthened by and by.

John F. Kennedy rose with youthful, urgent call,
 Then fell in Dallas to a nation's grief;
 As Lyndon B. Johnson bore the torch ahead,

And widened war beneath belief.

The drums of Vietnam War beat long and hard,
Till Richard Nixon turned the course to leave;
Yet Watergate scandal broke the public trust,
And forced a troubled chief to grieve.

Gerald Ford healed but briefly held the reins,
Then Jimmy Carter faced a hostage strain;
In Tehran a crisis lingered on,
Till Ronald Reagan rose to power's plane.

With George H. W. Bush came a measured turn,
Then Bill Clinton's long and shifting day;
And George W. Bush steered through storm and war,
As history pressed its weighty way.

Barack Obama broke a barrier old,
A symbol cast in progress, fraught and vast;
Then Donald Trump stormed with promise bold,
And Joe Biden answered from the past.

The present turns again on uncertain wheels,
Where power, fear, and vision interlace;
Old questions rise in new and stranger forms,
And time refuses steady pace.

What waits ahead—new states, new wars, new minds?
Will code outthink the hearts that gave it birth?
Shall stars be settled, moon to Martian dust,
Or ruin fall again to earth?

So runs the song from parchment into dream,
From muskets' smoke to circuits' silent gleam;
A nation cast between what is and was—
And all that flickers yet unseen.

A poem or a prayer

Carol Whitlow

A poem for police-people
And communities they care for
And children with cancer
And parents whose journalist son was beheaded
And refugees with no food or water
And farmers with no water
And cows who need water
And crops that need water
And those who are flooded or capsized or drowning
In sorrows and debts and don't forget
Disease with no cure
And death
When it comes
May we have the courage to face the life
That is still here
Needing water of hope and
Farmers who care
Needing people and police and journalists and governments who
Care for the people of the land
And who care for the land
If we are to survive.

It's In Our Nature to Be Free

Emily Sanders Hopkins

We just months ago
said "This is a free country."
Long gravel roads bend.

You say there's no kings.
I add: no rulers either.
Sun patch in holler.

In Mexico, dogs
will nap in packs by fountains,
church bells in the shade.

In West Virginia
Rhododendron crowd the hills.
Water tower stands.

Rose bushes leaning
up against an empty house,
clock ticks down the hall.

Now thunder's coming.
There's no stopping the weather.
I'm surprised they tried.

Born free, born naked.
In a downpour, trees tremble
raindrops bounce off leaves.

The forest is loud.
Foxes run low. Hawks shelter.
Storms last how they last.

RHYME

Paul Klee, *Torture*, 1938

Ben Howard

Could it ever have occurred to you
That in a future hour your geometric,
Blood-orange image might unsettle our hearts,
We nervous ones, or that we might construe
Those bold, black lines, that angular, concentric
Movement as a wave of hurt

Spreading from your century
And into ours? Tonight, that skull-like face,
Mute, fraught, and possibly not alive
Seems neither foreign nor apart from us
But native to the time in which we're living,
An emblem of a cruelty

That has no century or country.
How I would like to view your luminous painting
As but a mirror of another time,
Its ball and spear a ghostly memory.
But might they also represent a turning,
Should history elect to rhyme?

Fourth of July, the Year of 2025

John Ganshaw

Heart bleeds its blood in tears for lost humanity
Overwhelmed with sadness for the beaten and deprived.

See a country as it looked in a not-so-distant past
A time when all were welcomed to a glorious land.

Hopes and dreams came true for the disparaged man.
Family raised on compassion with an indescribable Pride.

Neighbors were family, and strangers were provided with seats.
Watch fireworks with friends, old and new, joined hand in hand.

In a world where we were all immigrants living on stolen land
Appreciation for the struggles of all who made this country a home.

Cry for the young men fighting on faraway and distant shores
Dying to protect the freedoms that we held so dear.

Love for those who were cast away, help for all in need.
Social programs were appreciated and provided for our security.

Beliefs have changed; those on Wall Street believe in the pursuit of greed.
All for one and no one else. Steal and take from the poor and middle class.

The downfall of this once-great land is now in view and even embraced
We have turned the corner of democracy and are heading towards full autocracy.

I sit and pray, wondering about what happens next, who will die, who will live.
America the Beautiful, once thriving in harmony, is becoming a distant dream.

Days go by, and I think that I shall not live to see the good ole days of the past.
Selfishness and hate aren't for me, but I will do my best to stand and fight.

The States United are being torn apart. Our banner waves for a different cause.
On this, the Fourth of July, our independence is drifting away and will soon be lost.

The Strong, The Fast, And The Tiny -a Story Told by the Tiniest Mouse-

Ü Lee

We are the Strong, the Fast, and the Tiny
 sharing a song of our glory
 Mice and a cat start this journey
 And one ends up out of this repertory

The Strong is slim, and the Fast is round
 I am the Tiny with the loudest sound
 We seemed to live in a paradise
 Until a threat that made us all think twice...

Lord Meow is a big gray cat
 With black stripes on his back
 Dressing himself like an aristocrat
 He acts more like a maniac

Lord Meow gets us one by one
 Only three of us now abide
 "The greatest might must be allied
 Will the Sun be on our side?"

"O Sun, the most powerful
 Be our friend. Our days are bleak"
 "I'm not as mighty as you think"
 All mice then cry, "whom shall we seek"

"The Wind blows the clouds that make me hide
 Nothing I do can move them aside"
 "The greatest might must be allied"
 Will the Wind be on our side?"

"O Wind, the most powerful
 Be our friend. Our days are bleak"
 "I'm not as mighty as you think"
 All mice then cry, "whom shall we seek?"

"The Wall stops me from further glide
 Nothing I do can move it aside"
 "The greatest might must be allied"
 Will the Wall be on our side?"

“The Wall, the most powerful
 Be our friend, Our days are bleak”
 “I’m not as mighty as you think”
 All mice then cry, “whom shall we seek?”

“One little thing that gnaw my bricks
 Nothing I do can stop your tricks”

“The greatest might are we!?”

One is strong. One is fast
 I’m tiny but my voice is vast
 Plans are made to take Lord Meow
 Success will come because we know the TAO (“The way to everything” in Mandarin)

“Lord Meow, you will never win
 I am right here, let the dance begin”
 Lord Meow grabs me with a grin
 The Strong spears a chopstick that hits him on the chin

The Fast ties Lord Meow up with a long thread
 The big gray cat becomes a fluffy fur bed
 In vain, the cat wants us torn to shreds
 We cheer out loud and the great joy spreads!

We are the Strong, the Fast, and the Tiny
 Sharing the song of Satori (“Enlightenment” in Japanese)
 May our future be shiny
 Help us keep sharing this story!

Totalitarian Night- Liberty's Day

Alexis Amsden

Velvet blanket night
lovingly quilted with stars and possibility
is not the sound of boots upon backs
off heartbeat

man made as fluorescent lights
state subservience gleams
sharply white as
bared teeth

for every night
There is a dawn
balance
for every voice
that is silenced
only
emptiness

may lady liberty's torch
burn away the blinders, the white hoods, the uniforms
burn away the manacles, the guns, the boots
burn away the hatred, the greed, the oppression
burn away the silence

and from ashes
we will build
liberty and justice
for all

The Revolution is being Televised

-after Gil Scott-Heron

Alex Stolis

You cannot escape it by staying home
the revolution is alive
the revolution is a nuclear sun melting black ice
the revolution will not let you rest.

There are no news highlights
there is no news, only revolution,
no memes, no theme song, no uniforms,
no military-industrial complex.

The revolution is being televised
in B&W
in Technicolor
in IMAX 3D.

The revolution is being televised as you read this
the revolution does not care about talking heads,
doesn't believe in DHS or FBI or ATF or
any other alphabet-despotic soup.

The revolution is being televised
while you eat, sleep, make love,
while you want to believe things are normal,
ignore the revolution at your own peril.

The revolution is being televised
coast to coast, station to station
a commercial free telethon streaming 24/7
it is Bot-proof, cleared of influencers.

This revolution takes no prisoners
it names names & kicks ass, it spins
spin back to truth, it's a Springsteen song
written, recorded, & released in 48 hours.

There will be no taping or film at 11:00
no reruns,
tune in or turn out

the revolution is being televised.

There will be no ctrl-alt-delete
lock screen, reboot
this revolution is being televised
is being televised live.

Song of the Veteran

Marlee Mancini

In the light of those before me
I see how my calloused hands and weary arms have been used
to build something back in this world,
to build something that lasts in this world.

The artillery pounds in the distance,
but my body knows what to do before my mind does.
Out here, strength is strength--no matter what form or vessel it stems from.

To those we watched fall into the enemy's sights,
to those we heard trembling deep into the night--
that soul of yours we pray will lead you home,
and the rifles at your backs we pray will be taken hold
and released to the ground where buried, far down, the silent dream of peace remains.
It is cracked, abandoned, and brittle,
but still, it waits.

All the wounded, the lame, the blind
that we could not shelter from the war's rage.
You will awake again to an eternal black morning,
you will return home again and face the life you once knew all in shadow.
Our tender hands could only keep you out of death's grasp,
but not the terror, the grief, and the echoes of all those ghosts.

On this side of the war--
this side, in the middle of humanity's insurmountable violence--
the blessing of making it from moment to moment is tainted
by the silent longing to fall, to let go of it all, and to resign ourselves
at last, to the end.

Here and now there is air in our lungs,
and our veins are rushing with rivers of lifeblood.
What we do here will echo far off
like an incessant and thunderous song that says,

“You here, who lived and fought,
shall never be silent nor absent in our thoughts.
You here, who died for this cause,
shall be honored and thanked
by the people of today
and those of well beyond.”

The Vessel

Michael Briggs

The Young
Make the best zealots
There are none more passionately self satisfied
In their hubris
Their hormones and chastised self purity
Pushing them to easy violence
Just look at the tale of Montague's and Capulets
I doubt either Romeo or Juliet
Had any regrets
For the lives spent
Chasing their own Truth
God looks upon both the
Righteous
And
Self Righteous
With the same bland gaze
Wondering if he should have elevated chimpanzees
At least they're honest about their violence
The leisurely self indulgences
Of performance activism
Just a different form of throwing your own shit
Trade one button for another
Damn your brother
Your sister
Your mother
If they don't share the same
Outrage
Fuck the world
Burn it to cinder
To a crisp
Set the dream as tinder
My screams the release
Run me through
With imagined peace
You murdered my dreams
And replaced them with your own
I was party to this, I put them on the throne

Time Immemorial: The Real Cost of War

Heather De Wolf

Countless youth sent off to war
to be come mere fragments of who they were before.
Maturing fast in the shadows of death and pain,
cursed to relive it all their lives,
again and again, and again.

Following orders, righteous is the lie
as gladly they make the ultimate sacrifice
in the name of honor and of glory
to come home and continue this timeless story.

Generations maimed for centuries on repeat,
never finding true honor, just a visceral and glorified defeat.
Lives torn to shreds in the name of defending the homeland,
then left to rot on return, no one offering a real helping hand.

Nobody really listening, or every truly knowing,
and misuse of various substance is the only thing that keeps them going,
but it kills them slowly, a death for their beloved nation all the same,
and no one will know their heavy soul, even if they do remember their name.

Maybe you'll cross a bridge with a dedication to them,
but you can never know the depths of hell to which they've actually been.
"God Bless the Troops, we love our soldiers"
but when shit gets real, all you have are the coldest of shoulders.

No real comfort offered, only tangible distractions,
prompting them to die, or just get back to the action.

No matter how brave, how rugged, how strong,
they always return to a home in which they no longer belong.
Numbing themselves to all that was done,
Everyone losing, for NO war is ever really won.
The lucky may get a plaque you will not even read,
as we continue this cycle of unfathomable suffering and unmitigated greed.

THE TRAIN TO FREEDOM

Frederick Henderson

The conductor hollers 'ALL ABOARD'
as the passenger cars fill one by one
Climbing aboard I quickly scan for a seat
preferably one facing away from the sun

Now I could have driven my car or taken a flight
but I prefer to ride the steel rails
For I have always believed that taking the train
is the best way to experience America and all she entails

The landscape continually changes and then changes again
as we roll our way down the coast
Our nation's capitol beckons, saying 'Come have a look
for there is much we hope to promote'

Eventually the coastline melds into fields of green
as we glide along this highway of steel
Passing thru mill towns once vibrant but now dying
after embracing The Art of the Deal

Eavesdropping on idle chatter that surrounds me
I soon find myself slipping away
My eyelids grow heavy and I drift off to sleep
missing the very best part of the day

I could have remained there in dreamland for quite awhile
but like most things it didn't last
Because I was rudely awakened by an obviously starving newborn
whose mother had the child on a forced fast

Realizing I too had missed my last meal
I make haste for the train's dining car
My intention was to order a nice juicy steak
then visit the well stocked salad bar

I was about to place my dinner order with the waiter
when a crazy scene happening just outside caught my eye
A cowboy was herding beef cows down to be slaughtered
thanks to that I couldn't eat steak now if I tried

So instead I ordered a tuna fish sandwich
along with a hot cup of tea
It wasn't a steak medium rare but when all was said and done

the meal I had did appease

Upon finishing my meal I remained sitting there awhile
as the churning of the steel wheels tickled my feet
Before long my waiter came along to politely inform me
that other diners were patiently waiting for my seat

With the train well on its way to democracy's birthplace
I thought about all that is good in this land
Give us your tired your poor huddled masses
who yearn to grasp hold of freedom's hand

An hour later the train pulled into Union Station
and everyone prepared to de-board
Entering the station I marvel at the structures massive marble walls
for such beauty cannot be ignored

Making my way toward the exit
I felt my heart start to pound in my chest
As I walked out into night the first thing I saw
made me savor for everything that came next

For the seat of democracy stood proudly before me
its rotunda crowned by this amazing statue twenty feet high
The bronze figure loomed over this city molded by sacrifice and blood
a truth that brought tears to my eyes

The Birthplace of Freedom embodies that spirit
and mine welled up in my soul
For patriotism is not the property of any one faction
liberty and justice belongs to us all

Across the vast expanse stood Washington's monument
further on Abraham Lincoln peered out on us all
On either side were the names of those who sacrificed their lives
in Korea and Vietnam and most recently Saint Paul

I arrived at this place of honor by taking the train of freedom
and it is by that train I shall soon depart
But I want to take a moment to thank God for His mercy and pray for this nation
for that is what I really came here to impart

REVOLUTION 1776/2026

Robert M. Fell-DeWalt

- R** 1776 Ready at a minute's notice to fight for our country's freedom.
2026 Ready at the drop of a hat to bicker over petty differences.
- E** 1776 Endowed by our Creator with dignity, beauty and intrinsic value.
2026 Endowed by myself to discern other's dignity, beauty and intrinsic value.
- V** 1776 Vigilant to protect against oppression of any kind.
2026 Vigilant to protect against opposition to my personal interests.
- O** 1776 Opportunity abounds for those of European descent – not including women or slaves.
2026 Opportunity abounds – not including the poor or marginalized.
- L** 1776 Loyal to the ideals of democracy, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.
2026 Loyal to the pursuit of happiness.
- U** 1776 United States of America.
2026 Unitized States of America.
- T** 1776 Truth is established by our Creator.
2026 Truth is established by me.
- I** 1776 Immigration is essential for nation-building – but is it welcome?
2026 Immigration is essential for sustaining our nation – but is it welcome?
- O** 1776 Others before self.
2026 Others after self.
- N** 1776 No Kings!
2026 No Kings! (Really!?! Do we have to fight this battle again!?!)

The Mirror

Kerianne Layrisson

This is not about him.
Not the gold towers, not the rage,
Not the way his voice split the air
like a wound we refused to close.

It's about us.
The way we flinched at our own reflection,
mistook our self-hate for truth,
forgot how to trust
because we were never taught how.

It was about what we believed we deserved
a fist, a fraud, a father who never came home.
We swallowed the shame, called it strength,
laughed when he crushed women
who reminded us of our mothers.

He could say anything.
Do anything.
Because it was never about him.
It's about the hollow we carry inside,
the echo of a country that never learned
to love itself.

If we want to heal,
we don't start with him.
We start with us.

Hurricane Katrina

Christopher McCarter

The present is a gift we seldomly open
 Pawned away for safer moments
 Loves lost never to be found
 A Kingdom come that may never come around

Time stands still the lights have dimmed
 A jaundiced moon adds a fitting trim
 The fiddler has come to collect his due
 For all the fun we once knew

You taught us well then let us go
 A lesson learned to help us grow
 Our spirits' breached with a flood of emotion
 Staying within reach of our magic potions

Imagining a life lived only in our dreams
 Living a life less alive than it seems
 We'll keep dreaming until we live this dream
 We hear you calling....New Orleans New Orleans

Masquerading for memories lost in this mess
 Hidden faces will never confess
 All that is gone, all that is gain
 In the midst of so much pain

Long days with long faces
 Longing for familiar places
 The faint of heart have drifted apart
 Floating away to make a new start

Your color has faded, what will you do
 We've put a call in but we cant get through
 Together we fell together we feel
 What time doesn't tell will surely heal

Imagining a life lived only in our dreams
 Living a life less alive than it seems
 We'll keep dreaming until we live this dream
 We hear you calling....New Orleans New Orleans

Bound to New Orleans,
 Bound For New Orleans

Builders

Jenn Atkins

I'm no longer mad at you
for being a fellow tool
I'd also been taught
to point at others
about my rust.
But isn't it time we get angry
at the well-oiled
MACHINE
That thrusts us in this box
Together
Shakes us
Ignores the true care we need
And plots us against each other
So it can continue
Working well for the few
While the many fight about
Who caused corrosion?
We could be a miracle
A human chain, holding hands
Building together instead.

Whatever Happened to America

Kenny Derr

We used to wake up in the morning look out the window to check the weather
 Make a couple calls and get all our friends together
 Grab your bike and meet down the street at Boland park
 And we'd play outside all day until it started to get dark
 When the street lights came on it was time to head home
 Check in with the rent's and see if we could go roam
 Gather up our buddies and split up into teams
 Manhunt was the game from Thomas to Bernice
 Those were the days, no safe zone area
 Man whatever happened to America?

Main Streets used to be booming with stores, no two the same
 And every owner knew your whole family by name
 Communities would thrive and businesses could grow
 From deeply planted roots the community did sew
 By supporting one another and listening to their stories
 We got to know each other's sadness and share each other's glories
 Somewhere down the line though all of this has changed
 Society has grown quite disturbingly deranged
 Now you look around and you see it in every area
 Man whatever happened to America?

When we were growing up there was no media frenzy
 To post all our daily feats or duck faces aplenty
 Or to post pictures of our kids for every silly first
 As we hand them all a trophy ensuring that bubble will burst
 Used to be a time when we were taught to stand up for each other
 Now it seems everybody's ready to face off against one another
 We got kids more worried about someone shooting up the school
 Than getting to be a kid and trying to fit in with what's cool
 Parents out here trying to be their kids best friend
 That ain't what's good for them though, in the end.
 I tell it's crazy; it's mass hysteria
 Man whatever happened to America.

What is Liberty?

Kirby Olson

Liberty: It's a notion that grew over 3,000 years:

Moses, Jesus,

Magna Carta,

John Locke:

English American French revolutions.

Against it the huddling masses,

Yearning to breathe free.

The seaspray against the bronze.

I'd like to step out of my dad suit

and become a non-stinging insect—

lighter than a glider—floating

through New York's orange air,

on my way to the latest restaurant,

where I would land on a platter

and eat for free (too small

to carry a wallet), and helicopter away,

leaving the waitress holding her tray,

 a stunned Statue of Liberty.

Untitled

Alayna Hernandez

We are each presented with a choice that occurs the moment we open our eyes every morning,
In which we decide whether we will embrace the anger and fight fire with fire,
Or seek solace in the ocean, where we just as well may drown.

Some mornings, the choice feels like a memory I never made,
A survival instinct wrapped in silk and called softness. Passive.
Some mornings, I ache to unchoose,
To let the fire speak for me.
But I fear enough is burning already.

In the meantime,
I choose love,
But I have to acknowledge that this choice may have been made for me.
Because I've been asked to keep my head low and my standards for living lower,
Because I've been questioned and poked and prodded at,
Because I've feared for what would happen if I chose to scream instead of whisper.

I choose love,
Because you can't take a breath of fresh air nowadays without inhaling smoke that copes for
smoke
Because I know I can't speak for those who have suffered and I know I have no right nor place,
And I know that while I have a facade of a choice, more don't have the pleasure of an illusion.

I choose love,
And I will continue to choose it in all of its shapes and colors,
Because someone has to be here to pick up the pieces,
Because we can only put on someone else's oxygen mask after we've put on our own,
Because we can only survive if we rely on ourselves 100% and if we rely on each other with that
same 100%.
Because we know that they are praying for us to burn with the rest, and stew in the ashes,
Because they don't expect us to be the ones to lift each other up,
Because they hope we inhale enough smoke to forget what fresh air tastes like,
And because they don't expect us to still be standing after the fire gets smothered.

Because the world is loud with grief and I've grown tired of screaming into the void,
Because I've seen what bitterness builds and what softness survives,
Because I know what it is to be burnt and unable to reach for something beautiful.
I crave the something beautiful.

I choose love,

Though it is not passive, nor painless.

It is a daily defiance, a quiet revolution in a world that rewards the loudest and bloodiest of wounds.

My choice is to plant seeds with no guarantee of harvest,
To extend a hand when mine is already shaking.

I choose love,

Not because it's easy,

But because it's the only way you and I can stay whole, the 100%,

Because I refuse to mirror the hurt that tried to shape me and us and the innocent,

Because peace is not the absence of conflict — it's the presence of a greater understanding
that fire simply does not beat fire.

I choose love,

And I will keep choosing it —

In the silences where no one's watching and even less are listening,

In the moments when fire's rage would feel so fucking warm,

In the heavy, heart-worn hours when I am all out of reasons justifying my choice —

I will still choose love.

Because in the end,

It is the only thing that lets me sleep through all of the noise,

And it is the only thing that lets me wake up

And do it all again tomorrow.

Spinning

April Amlong

Another bomb explodes into the night
 Lighting up the village like it's daytime
 You all stand by waiting for a call. Is it time to go yet?
 Or do you lean the seawall?

Oh lord, I don't ask much of you
 But I need you to keep him safe
 In this time of living, he'll
 He needs protection that I can't give
 So if you cover him with love and peace
 Maybe my heart and mind won't dwell
 Because im tired of running
 And the world won't stop spinning
 Oh no, im out of strength

Clear beaches, white sand
 such a paradise
 But it's plagued in black and smoke
 Dusted in Grey, so the sun is hard to find

Another day, with another hazy text
 Not sure what you're doing
 And no one is sure what's next
 Battleships line the clear water
 Covered by the sailors and the Corps
 The heaven that once stood here is consumed by war

I know the smell of powder is on your skin.
 I know you've seen things you wish that never been
 I love you, but im. tired and im living off amen
 But I'll keep running until the end

Another bomb explodes into the dark sky
 But the blue was there...
 And all the heroes cried

Fragile Where It Matters

Monique Susanna Simón

They say we are too fragile now,
too soft, too quick to bruise—
as if feeling is a flaw,
as if tenderness is the sickness
and callousness the cure.

But let me tell you what should break us

Let our hearts shatter at injustice,
at empty plates and hollow eyes,
at sickness left to fester
while wealth builds towers to the sky.

Let us be fragile about cruelty,
about the jokes oft planted
whose roots are rotted in hate,
the hands that strike,
the words that burn,
the silence that agrees.

Let our skin thin for the trees,
for rivers choking on our waste,
for the earth we strip,
the homes of named loved ones—
loved in name only,
absent of the tenderness and tending
that make houses homes.

Let us be weak for love.
Let our spines soften for mercy.
Let us tremble at the thought
of letting hate shape our hands.

For it is not the fragile who destroy,
but those who wield their wounds like swords,
who make rage a gospel,
who kneel only to anger
and call it power.

If we must be broken,
let it be for kindness.
If we must be fragile,
let it be for each other.

America My Home

Sagara Mati

America my home of homes
I've lived upon your land
For nearly 60 years
I've seen your forests, canyons, and sands

The strength of the people
Has led our convictions
We have won many fights
And healed government afflictions

A tea party in Boston
One of many protests
Some granted the Suffrage
Others blared Civil Rights unrest

And now we are in turmoil again
America, once proud and united
Has again been broken—
America the divided

One of the things that makes us so great
Is the hope, freedom, and dreams
We the people together
So many voices scream

For 250 years this country has strived
There has been several wars
Depression and strife
But somehow America has survived

Democracy guides us to let freedom ring
We all are in this together
No matter life's difficulties
And we can always do better.

So I sit in my little house high on a hill
And I hope that our freedoms remain
I think about those who divide us
And pray that our courage sustains

This country is made by the people themselves
America, not some of us, but ALL
The one thing I have learned in my 60 years is
United we stand, divided we fall.

Peace

Who Knows

Quana L. Bice

Americans, the miracle of cars and trucks
 Beetle-bright and beautiful
 In Autumn slant of sun
 On the bridge studded with bulbous
 Green, powder-coated rivets - another miracle! -
 With suspension over Susquehanna.
 The vehicles! Americans replicating jewels
 In solar light so bright it camouflages
 Mud and dust. Americans again and again
 And again and glitter water and
 Glitter industrial automotive coating,
 Again Americans: you're beautiful.

West Coast Elite
 Midwest Sage
 Southwest Sagebrush Elite
 East Coast Rural Sage
 Lakeside Elite
 Upper-mid Pacific Sage
 Rural North Elite
 Atlantic-based Sage

One after another (and another) passing
 Opposite old, young, passing
 Single-occupancy middle-age, and
 Old again. Americans multiplied and
 Brilliant. O beautiful! O rust! O zone.

Layers

Ricky Ericson

Wake up to cold.

The kind of cold that only ever has the guts to show up after we've reached our breaking point,
after we've turned a corner into January 22nd.

Says you've had enough of the dark,
but what about this?

Lay in bed.

Check on the cat.

The one receiving palliative care for a terminal disease that happens because little kitty organs have a hard time keeping
up with seventeen years.

9:28 a.m. and the flatbed is here with pellets.

Crawl out of bed, wind down the stairs.

Make Chris cruise direct pallet placement because me—
well, I am in my winter puppy jammies.

I'll cruise direct the coffee.

Empty garbage cans.

Break down cardboard.

Bundle up and cover my mouth and nose and eyes, too,
because the sky is clear and the sun already high.

Drive to the dump.

The gas station for propane, in case we need the generator,
and a case of Mich Ultra.

The farm market for the bagels I like.

Home again.

Layered on the couch with turtlenecks and blankets and dogs,
trying to finish a season 1–4 rewatch of *Stranger Things*.

Pause to let the dogs out (quickly)
and my phone yells at me the second I
open it.

Another person, executed in the street.

In broad daylight.

In the morning, actually.

Something like five shots.

I'm sick.

We're sick.

The Ghosts I See On Vacation Follow Me Home Because That Is Where I Bring Them From

Calen MacDonald

Red hat, white letters? Had to do a double take.

New to town,
 Toronto,
 took some time
 to swallow
 six drinks or so—
 spilled two so
 there's no way to know.
 Cruising Church Street,
 knocking door to door.
 Looking for an altar,
 to bring me to my knees,
 make me sing "O Canada
 please.

Two days later,
 I found the right place;
 Church full of heathens,
 The devil inside,
 Saint Stephen-in-the-Fields,
 Punk is very much alive.
 Short king, French boy
 keeps finding my face.
 Short king's wingman
 ain't landing that plane.
 Talking to his toes
 while I'm spitting my game;
 The beat starts hitting
 and I'm doing my thing.

The bass is getting low,
 nobody's moving slow.
 Downright diabolical,
 moshing turbo mode.
 I don my monocle
 so I can see it all;
 short king starts to fall.
 His ass is on the ground.

He's getting kicked around
and I got no recourse
but to lend a hand
to this little man...

Bro is not my friend.
He wants to get it in.
His eyes are salivating;
I'm gonna keep him waiting
because I can't really say that I want this;
Moreover my libido is a flight risk.
Bro has hedged all his bets
on a subliminal message
that I've long since intercepted
and like a kid's sandwich I cut off the edges:
Didn't bring these shears to trim no fucking hedges.
You couldn't pay me to pursue the whole of this encounter;
I don't wanna plow a garden if it hasn't been deflowered,
and I didn't drive four hours to fuck a French coward.

My ass is too tight,
like I parallel parked it;
Cinched so much
I can't even fart,
Shit—
I can't fuck a stranger
even in a strange land.
Can't show what's in my pants
without showing my hand:
There's one man's face
that I see in every crowd;
There's never been a bass
that could drown him out.
If you could feel for a second exactly what he did to me
the pause in each breath would bear such goddamn meaning;
So shut up or restrict my fucking breathing.

Scorched Earth

Bran McGregor

Driving down along the shores of Cayuga

Signs of sullivan's... atrocities

litter the landscape

40 villages of the Haudenosaunee razed

crops destroyed

nothing and no one left

Native presence scorched from the Finger Lakes

Completely scraped away from the heart of their confederacy

It's hard to imagine

marching through such a beautiful setting

from the Susquehanna to the finger lakes

and destroying everything in sight. Every last thing.

A VILLAGE ONCE STOOD HERE

AND SULLIVAN BURNED IT TO THE GROUND

village after village marker after marker

a campaign of scorched Earth that became stolen land

incredibly valuable, gorgeous land

starvation and decimation

PEOPLE WERE MURDERED HERE

[the signs should say]

a culture was murdered here

I keep driving and a Bald Eagle decides to show me the path for awhile

Twisting, turning, diving down to the water and coming back up to the tree tops

going oh-so fast through the air

I speed up just to keep up

I turn to go up the hillside

away from Cayuga

wonderful shining lakeside in the rearview

and an enormous hawk greets me

a perfect white band around the tail

and a stunning headdress stretching below

I felt the Elders

I felt the Great Chiefs and powerful Clan mothers

wronged, betrayed, caught in a crossfire bigger than them

not even about them

We see you

Thank you for your tears

WE ARE STILL HERE and this land will always be ours

Sullivan

the true savage

U.S. Steel, 1966

Robert Bensen

Pushed white-hot from the furnace mouth, half-ton billets
 squeeze through rollers, reach the reeler
 at bullet-speed, then coil and cool. Are supposed to,
 three shifts a day, 7 days a week. Wartime.
 But this one hit wrong, cobbled, looped,
 and slithered out on the walkway's cement.
 An hour lost, no limbs, to fix the roller, run
 a test sample. Get back on the clock and roll that steel.
 The whole shift gathered, black men come north
 from the mills of Mobile and Bethlehem. Plus me.
 Their glance said give the white kid a chance. So I took
 the tongs, squared up to ram the test piece through.
 But I botched the heave-ho. They make it look so easy!
 I backed it off. Gathered all my puny strength,
 but another scrape and dead-stop in the channel.
 The biggest man I ever saw, took off his hard hat
 and stepped toward me, and in the kindest way
 offered his massive hand like he was welcoming me
 to his church. In a way, he was: the church
 of men who commune with fire and steel,
 who give of their bodies and blood, their days and nights,
 who bless and cuss each other out with equal conviction.
 I hand-signed for one more, one more try.
 I clamped the tongs on that cherry-red hot piece of shit
 and somehow found the strength where theirs must come from,
 and leaned in and slammed it home. The roller bit the steel
 and me almost with it, but I yanked the tongs free.
 Then behind me, muffled in asbestos gloves, applause!
 So I turned and took my first bow, I guess.
 The all-clear horn blared *look alive, look alive*,
 and we headed back to our death-traps
 to make the steel that made the guns that made the war.
 Sometimes when the mill broke down, say 3:00 a.m.,
 I'd step out in the steaming night, lie down and balance
 on a rail between my shoulder blades, cross my ankles,
 my whole length against that polished, cold steel.
 I'd get lost in the depth of stars, and in the silence
 of the shut-down heard my ears ring.
 Hard hat for a pillow, body drained enough
 to catch some z's until five flatcars of billets
 juddered into the yard. I woke, rolled off in time.
 The blues the rail sang still sings up my spine
 fifty years later. The mill is gone, down to the concrete
 foundation. The men, where did they go?
 The office building where my sister worked,
 the machine shop where her husband worked,
 also gone. Fifty married years, gone. That's more
 than most of us get, unless we're lucky, until somebody
 upstairs blows the whistle and we all go home.

Decorative Ears

Mackenzie A. McLean

I am but a mere amalgamation
Of every expectation that has been pre-set for me.
I see, not myself, but rather what sense dreams I could be.
So focused on the reapings of tomorrow,
I forget to savor the gifts of the present.
It burns me.
It burns my very soul to yearn for more.
Much more.
And yet, I wait.
I wait,
And when I do swallow the large pill that is my pride,
I find myself standing alone, my hands glued to a beaten lectern,
Preaching to a hall of people in which the only answers I receive,
Are from the walls.
Waiting for flowery words to fall
On decorative, porcelain ears.
I am not heard.
I speak.
I speak and I wonder as to why I urge myself to write with flourishing language.
Why decorate raw emotion with romantic design?
I find an answer
Deep in my burning, yearning soul:
For maybe one day, when I continue to stop waiting,
My words will land on decorative, porcelain ears;
Like elegant swirls and shimmers of gold leaf,
Or intricate lazuli rims of fine china.
And perhaps my romantic design will anoint itself there, to creep its way into someone's mind,
Traveling to their soul.
So they too,
Can burn for more.

BROKEN WINGS

David McDermott

the wings of this eagle,
are divided and weak,
They don't flap in unison,
They don't listen when we speak.

They each have an agenda,
They ignore our plea's,
They flap only for money,
They don't care if we freeze.

These wings once worked together,
They found common ground,
2 wings, many feathers,
The problems conquered, were profound.

These wings flap for money,
The highest bidder wins all,
The Halls have turned scummy,
The eagle will now fall!

Two wings flapping in unison,
The eagle soars high,
When they flap separately,
Times up, crash and die!

So take these broken wings,
Reset them without a fee,
Learn to fly again,
So we can live free!

LEVIATHAN FALLS

Jonathan A Beiswanger

The bespangled banner, the symbol
for
Land once surfeit with opportunity
Feels as if it no longer represents
Lady Liberty's welcoming for those
Yearning to breathe free. Her own
children are
Now the wretched refuse that at one
time
She embraced in her patinated arms.
I fear her base metals shall soon be
stripped,
Leaving only behind her pedestal
And plaque waxing poetichollow
words
Much like the once great
Ozymandias.
But just as the patriots of the past,
I believe in what our country can be
In spite of all the threats to
sovereignty.

Vagrant

Sebastian Ormiston

unbar the rusty iron gates of history and
enter the dark and gloomy tunnel of time.

you are a geologist and you study stratigraphy. you peel back the layers of the stone
shine them under your light.

the top layers are chemically anguished
crimson red and azure swirls shimmer through them

black in the natural state of the cave.
this work is exactly what it is; it is work.

you can't help but notice a pattern in these layers. you can't help but notice
the fossils in the stone and just how small those finger bones are

how gems and stones alike have been replaced
with asphalt and concrete

you have too much time to think at work.
you decide humans are just moral animals

& it is not their fault that the monumental tunnel of power
towers over their masses

in one moment, you believe they are trying so hard to get better
the next, you decide they will never change

because nature and spirit met in the wrong place
at the wrong time.

it is imperative you keep going. you must labor.
you must do it for the world, for the tunnel, for the fossils

you were a stratigrapher and
now you are the bird, the sentinel species

and you can't tell if that's the light at the end of the tunnel
or just the train

HAVE YOU HEARD

Yvonne Fisher

Have you heard We are here now All of us together We are here underground
 Waiting for our time All of us together The global majority The African
 Americans The Latinas The Asians All people of Color The Indigenous
 among us The gender fluid The drag queens The evolutionary future

The women among us The children protesting The elders among us The allies
 behind us We are here now All together waiting We are watching and growing
 We are here to tell our stories We are coming for the future We are evolving and
 unfolding We are refusing the current situation We are changing the culture
 We are changing everything: Power Beauty Dreams Spirit You are with us or
 you are not We are coming for the future We are here and we are singing

We are here and we are dancing We are marching in the streets We are telling all
 our stories Have you heard the real story? Have you heard the truth?

It's a secret No it's not We are here and we are coming Getting stronger
 every day We are coming for the future Don't get in our way

take heart

Rob Sullivan

when push comes to shove
you write and love
as though life and soul
depended on the expression
of brilliance and resilience
in the action taken

when push comes to shove
the turning in the seat of consciousness
is the bravest response
to apathy's tyranny

when push comes to shove
you stand up
like a strong tree
whose roots run deep and wide
stand for truth, justice and the compassionate way

It's Not Political

Gabriel Orcutt

Every morning I scream
"Wake up America"
And they still sleep
Too afraid they'll contract a virus
Made only of fiction and fear
To leave others out
Left to never be endeared

Rest comes to those
Who have never felt unrest
And yet suggest they have,
Throwing fists and false rhetoric
While whining about how their
President shouldn't
Be put under arrest

"WAKE UP" I scream at people
Who look like me
Skin white as snow
With a dangly bit
Not free of sin

Yet they're convinced
Otherwise and deny
Others of freedoms
Claiming it comes from
Love and Jesus

I never met God
Except small conversations
With a friar
Who taught God was love,
Just as was his son

The Bible isn't
Just about miracles
But about humanity

Jesus taught to love your neighbor,
Not force them to a country
They have never shared
A meal in

"Turn the other cheek" said Jesus
 But others allege that it is
 Our duty to pledge allegiance
 To a man who shouts
 "One really violent day"
 Is all he needs to make crime
 Go away

Funny how that insinuates
 He too would go away,
 Getting rid of crime
 And not allowing for criminals
 To stay

But instead he's white like me
 So we're both privileged
 To have intense influence
 On those who haven't sipped
 Their coffees
 Or wiped their glasses
 Or raised their heads
 From their pillows

It's not policy being promoted
 But human indecency
 Being the new normal
 And accepted
 Creating problems that don't exist
 As if less than one percent
 Of the population is causing
 A crisis within the U.S.

The land of the free as
 Long as you aren't
 A woman, gay, trans, or
 Any other race than Caucasian

A country built by immigrants
 Now being told to leave
 Though its land was already stolen
 By white men

My family came from
 Ireland not long ago
 But because I am fortunate
 To come from a country that's white
 I will never be looked at in spite
 Except for when I look at myself

In the mirror and wonder
What can I do for my dear?

"Wake up America" I say
As the response lies silent
Not because I'm quiet
But because other white men
Are louder than I

I feel powerless as
I look at my girlfriend and know
That already if we were
To move to another state
That she wouldn't have the same
Rights as she does elsewhere

How is that fair?

Talks of getting rid of her rights
In an attempt to make men
Like me superior
Is something that makes
Me feel inferior
To those in a position
Of power who choose
To be angrier

So now I will remain hopeful
When there isn't much left
Only deep in Pandora's box
Does it lie
Along with my fingers
Scraping by

I am a straight white man
So why do I scream "WAKE UP?"
Because I'm tired of hitting
Snooze and joking about
Hitting the booze
Wishing something would
Change on the news

Hate remains the loudest voice
The one chanting
From my alarm clock
While love steams through
My nose in my morning cup
Quietly

Attempts (to Keep on Loving)

Mona Eikel-Pohen

I try to listen to the news, but can't
Delusion, madness, hate
 The man distributes poison
 — *I counter with my breathing in and out*
 to rake the power-hungry 'round himself.

ON KEEPING LOVE.

I try to read a novel, but can't
on microscopic levels
 Too much conscious looking away
on systemic levels
 too deep inside the bubble to puncture its walls with needles of truth
as institutions were not made for this
 The bubble self
relationship.
 KEEP LOVING ON.

I try to read a play but can't
as I want truth, live it, share it, give it
 without despairing over it.
 ON LOVE TO KEEP.

I try to live but I can't
just as the land on which I eat, sleep, love,
 without a doubt, guilt, or remorse
does not belong to me.

OH KEEP IT ON.

I try to write and love
relationships
 before me
unrelentingly
 like embers swallow polar vortices
unyieldingly
 like giant snakes eat elephants, their love
shaping me.

Keep loving. Stay in love. Love on.

The Unfinished Dream

Jimmy Russell

We carried the weight of names carved in history, And others we lost to the shadows of the night. Before the world watched, there was a quiet mystery, In the echoes of those who never saw the light. We remember the spirits of those taken too soon— From the porch, from the car, from the safety of home, Leaving us hollow beneath a grieving moon, Waiting for a harvest we had yet to sow.

Now we stand in the thick of the restless heat, Where Breonna Taylor should be waking to the sun, And George Floyd should be walking down a city street, Instead of becoming symbols of a fight never won. The "sober" mind sees the jagged, raw truth: That the fight isn't a memory, it's the air that we breathe. We're still paying the toll with the lives of our youth, While we balance the hope with the need to grieve.

But I still see that mountain, tall and unbowed, Where the air is clear and the treatment is fair. A world where "equal" isn't shouted to a crowd, But is whispered in the silence of the morning air. One day we'll stand where the climb finally ends, Where the "others" are neighbors, not ghosts on a wall, Where the dream doesn't break when the daylight begins, And we finally rise, once and for all.

Dwellings of a Mermaid

Lkhamaa Sanjaadorj

I was walking in the valley of the deaf and blind

How terrible it was

No one could hear me or see me

Only the ghosts of people I saw around me

Talking with each other mutely following a direction I could not see

I have followed them till I was tired out to the bones

Only to find out when I was out of breath that they have hit the walls

They kept hitting it and seemed content with it did not even know I was following them

Disappointed in my dwellings and wasted time and aim

I soothed now my more than ever emptier heart

That there must be a valley with a better light than the dark on enclosing on me now

The darkness heaved heavier on me now

If before it was only on the outside it found a leakage into me now

Everything became dark nothing could be seen

Heavy darkness became thicker as the night drew nearer

All around me nothing but stillness

Until I suddenly became free in my darkness

As if though my heart breathed for the first time

No longer shuddering or throwing bitter words at my destiny

I took a step for the first time with the power and confidence of the darkness in me

When confidence shakes you and expectations leave you doors open

For the first time a music was heard along with the growing skylight

A deep music that came along with my footsteps with a deep purpose

That led me into a direction unknown

Never before unknown was so known to me before

As a rootless tree finally grows into the ground

So the feeling ancient as the time yet unknown to my growing mind

Led my back to my roots

For the first time my feelings led me and not my inadequate mind

That grew to hit the walls

As I listened to the deep music of the waves of feelings that have erupted

From the despair of the enclosed walls of my mind

A little lights appeared on the path before me to lead me more and more

Into the unknown.....

Nothing could stop me or hold me back anymore

With the power of the sweet and deep music I dwelled everywhere

I could not see but I felt

I felt the immense light around me wings that carried me of my feet everywhere I felt

Suddenly I felt for the first time connected to everything alive around me

Plants, animals, trees....

The whole planet was playing a symphony;

A symphony of the God;

How wonderful it was; nothing was out of chords,

A love that poured all around

A deep profound love that poured all around

A paradise in the edge of your heart.

We were all connected.

AMERICA THE DETERIORATING

Suzanne Robison

Incredulous, outraged, disgusting, sickened and sad,
Wailing for my children, my grandchildren and my America,
Citizens, Ruben Martinez, Renee Good and Alex Pretti were killed by ICE on city streets,
Has the Federal Government gone mad?

The abuser in a domestic abuse situation is known for isolating, intimidating, monitoring and gaslighting,
Escalation of control evolves into depriving basic needs such as food and medical care,
Physical harm completes the menu hoping to produce trauma bonding,
Residents in America are being treated just like battered spouses; totally frightening!

The USA is now the bully deliberately dehumanizing and demonizing any person and any nation in opposition
to their plans,
Congress appears to have lost all control as checks and balances are gone,
Horror upon horror is being perpetrated by the Executive Branch and the MAGA group thinks they're grand.
O beautiful for spacious skies, how long before democracy dies?

Standing at the Cutting Edge of the Fascist Takeover of America

Jessica Femiani

I

As we walk past the house with the four-foot silver Buddha, seated in the wooden beams of a treehouse

shrouded in lilac branches bursting, my friend Maria tells me, you can't do this kind of thing in Russia.

Her eyes glance at the Not-My-President bumper sticker slapped on the back of an old tank of a Buick. Maria talks

about the things I had heard that people disappear when they say things, like her mother's brother, Uncle Boris.

Then the neighbor downstairs, they took him in the middle of the night, just like that. We are in it now, no longer

on the cusp: Kilmar Ábrego García, Mahmoud Khahil. God bless, Zohran Mamdani. These days I ask myself

should I make a quick getaway? The way Gerhard Richter drove himself out of East Berlin, never to see most

of his family again. I can see why Maria's thoughts didn't make sense to me then, I guess I never thought

I'd have a reason to worry like that. The same way it never clicked when a blonde haired, blue-eyed little girl named

Christina made her way out of the woods & into my childhood backyard, just like a fairytale, that it was anything but.

My mother tells me, Christina's parents had been refugees in Rome, having escaped the Russian pogroms of the 1980s.

I don't know if it were the nightly news with Dan Rather, or if as a child, I could conjure fear out of anything. But after

Christina moved in, I began having nightmares of being caught in the woods by Russian soldiers. Every night

they hid in the woods, driving the butts of their rifles into the center of my chest, pinning me to the ground.

II

The experiment of America is now Cowboy Town.
Masked thuggery, haranguing immigrants, citizens.

Shattering windows, windshields, throwing mothers to the ground, abducting elementary-aged school children

makes me think this dystopian nation is the fallout of the flagrant willed blinding of men and women

living in a country of stunted vision? Or is it the gluttonous desire driving our own consumption

that wills us to push the truths of hard history aside?
Leaving us to mark history with half-priced mattresses.

Not because Bob Barker would say, "The price is right."
But because it is the Dream that has gone awry.

It is the dream that gets you, gets you to believe if you move your children to the suburbs, they will be safe. Gets you

to believe your children will be happy to have all that you did not.
The morning Silverio Villegas Gonzales drops one son

at nursery school, it is likely in this small Chicago suburb, Silvio was worrying his fate as undocumented.

Outside the traffic light, ICE gunned him down. The records, the bodycams shows no threat. His two orphaned sons, now

somewhere in foster care in Idaho, five states west of Illinois. No experience necessary, Kristi and Markwayne want more

bodies on the ground, to wreak more havoc on Black & Brown hearts. Because they say, they say those people, *they cross borders,*

they break the law, they're lazy, they steal. Americans are challenged
by the ease of their circumstance, they can't comprehend

the backbreaking work they refuse, left for the undocumented.
To pick corn, tear husks, stock wooden crates, staplegun shut,

stack high, *how can you?* The undocumented slaughter cows,
the pigs, the chickens, sometimes losing fingers, hands, whole limbs

to bring Americans, all your beloved barbecued burgers,
how can you? The undocumented haul endless crates of apples,

oranges, ruby-red grapefruits. Undocumented hands submerged
in streaming baths of ice-cold, for twelve to fourteen, whittling carrots

into bite-sized babies. *How can you?* Tell your three-year-old,
Daddy, is at work, attacking the illegal people. How can you?

All the oligarchs, the bounty hunters, the pimps. *How can you?*

the stars and strata

Angie Jae

there is a comfort in knowing that at least the stars never change
 a notion born of rebels
 a nation seeded with freedom
 a knowing formed from wandering truth
 a heart beating red and blue
 we are the same
 we are the same
 we are the same

so, why do we fight each other for a stake in this golden claim?
 we are brother
 we are mother
 we are friend
 in a landscape abundant, buried in brutal battle
 we are not just soldiers
 and eaters
 and prayers
 if we dig into the rich soil
 and look into the sky
 if we smell the ocean air
 and hear the eagle cry
 we find seekers
 and dreamers
 and weavers
 we find innocence again
 gasping for air, searching for the stars
 to guide its way home
 bc it knows they never change

yes, Rome rose too close to the sun,
 and then,
 ruined its wings as it fell back down to earth
 but we don't have to fall
 yes, cities burned to ashes make for fertile soil
 but we don't have to burn
 yes, the heavens open to flood the lands, carrying civilizations into the sea
 but we don't have to drown
 the end of times are the beginning of times
 and we set the vision
 it is through the eye that we see what is to come
 and we decide, together
 we set the vision

the only way we stand in this earthquake landscape is hand and hand
 the only way we survive is by feeding our neighbor with our bread,
 and receiving our wine from our friend
 the only way we see is by feeling through the hands,
 and let the healing body be the work of art
 the only way we breathe is by crying out from within our soul

we are the same.
the pain we cause another is the pain we do unto our self,
and so too, is the goodness reciprocated
we are the same.
the body bleeds both red and blue,
and, we are the same.
we just have to remember again;
uncover our eyes and seek the stars
may we remember
may we see
may it be so,
and always be

Immigrant Song Decreed by Janus on January 2nd, 2026

Margot Farrington

** Note: Janus, the two-faced Roman god of gates, transitions, time, beginnings and endings*

The bigger wolf not possible, you
send the smaller kin, to sing of
past and future, to open and
shut the doors into darkness.

Tomorrow's the super-moon,
but Coyote takes for her own
tonight's, whose clarity bares the land,
whose one blue glove commands.

She must obey, and what I hear
is not ecstasy of the hunt, nor
do others join her. She seems
to crouch beside the house,

take refuge close to a wall, as if
to forestall the hours to come.
Her song commences with lament,
notes saw-toothed by sorrow. Isn't it

wholly bereavement, and why would
it not be? I've never heard the current
state so harrowingly detailed: those
deaths tallied, the spent breath of
fugitives vented in her song—such
gasps as elude reason, such sobs wrung

from intuition, having understood she
no longer has anywhere she can belong.

Dear America at 250

Vicki Whicker

We see farmers on denim knees
Searching dirt
For last years grain

Dear America

We see pride on bended knees
Searching for justice
With no shame

Dear America

We see blooded knees
Search through rubble
For your flame

Dear America

We see charred streets from our knees
Searching ashes
For rights to reclaim

Dear America
America dear
America

No Kings No Kings No Kings
Your masses do proclaim
And rise again on sturdy knees

C. N. Plizga

The apartment
punishes the landlord
for another vacancy

The law
punishes the landlord
for having a squatter

Society
asks the landlord
why he has no tenants

The landlord responds
He is young /
He does not want any tenants /
No tenant wants the apartment /
He did not want the apartment
in the first place.

The landlord
asks why
he must be a landlord

Society responds
because
you have an apartment

Society
punishes the landlord
for having (no) tenants

The apartment
punishes the landlord
for another monthly vacancy

Sixty Years Ago

Zajal (Katharyn Howd Machan)

Gino Bush's aunt was the very first
Black belly dancer to grace the space
of Carnegie Hall in the 1960s,
amethyst sequins just right for her skin,
dark violet silk skirt flowing.
She's smiling wide in the photograph,
one hand on her hip and the other raised
to hold the arm of another dancer
in scarlet as they pause on the stage.
Which Egyptian music filled
the theater as the audience clapped
to dumbeks' rhythmic call? All
Gino knows is what family's said:
she moved with strength and passion's pulse
aware and proud as a woman of color
she brought to her loving troupe
the rainbow's deepest hue.

Welcome to the Capitol

Cassidy Heid

The Elite stand with their backs pressed together,
 Fingers pointed in mock rebellion:
 Charlie's Angels. Boundaries
 Meant to be tested but never
 Crossed, experiences that
 Cement rock-solid
 Foundations,
 Coats of arms
 Etched into
 Stone
 Gargoyles
 That command
 Your respect
 By way of
 Talons
 Dug
 Into
 Your
 FLESH

While
 The rest
 Of us stand
 On broken toes
 And assert ourselves
 While choking on
 Layers of unrelenting proclamations
- People like you -
 If authenticity is meant to be displayed
 In a glass house
 among decorative pieces of jade,
 Then why does it feel like
 An act of treason
 To straighten
 My spine?

WHAT SAY YOU, THOMAS

Don Griffin

WHAT SAY YOU, THOMAS
OF THESE MORTALS LOST?
YOUR QUILLNOW BLEEDS
WORDS FORSAKEN
BY VINDICTIVE SOULS,
TORN ASUNDER
BY COWARDICE
BORN OF FEAR
OF TYRANT'S RATH.
DID WE NOT
ALSO FEAR, THOMAS?
BUT, ALAS,
GOOD MEN ROSE
AGAINST TYRANNY.
DO NOT TOMBSTONES SHOW?
TYRANNY HAS NO HOME
WHEN GOOD MEN RISE
TO RING LOUDLY
A FREE MAN'S BELL!

Our o boros

Lacey

love flowing in creation,
 letting go,
 Of any expectation
 No explanation,
 Just ethereal culmination
 Never yearned for fame,
 No household name
 I just show appreciation toward the game
 For letting me play
 You're an artist kid
 It is what it is
 That's the good,
 &bad of it
 Dichotomy
 Split,
 Sustaining this place,
 Seems impossible
 Without,
 It
 Never made noise to fit in,
 Or be seen
 Just needed to release
 This burning desire within me
 It's raw,and ugly
 Society has done its best
 to convince me
 Best unseen
 Stay small
 Sheep
 I promise i tried
 To stay asleep
 To deny me
 To suppress
 To kill&
 To defy me
 To pretend
 Yet, again, and again
 Somethings always
 Pulled me out just in time
 Something surreal
 Something divine

&these days
I don't ask why,
I just hear the call
&realign

Are/Our People

Allie Blanchard

My people, Your people, Our people, We people

Finding the place in which our heads can lay

Society challenges the approaches we take

Where in the world can we find somewhere safe

This village is home, yet none of us are alike

This village is home, we all know what it's like

Take the peace, plant the trees

We're all something past our own identities

He does not understand

She will never really get it

All we want is normality

Yet in this world we cannot have it??

My people, Your people, Are people, We people

Are the change and the reckoning upon the day we're becoming

Allow individuals to flourish, for once do not put us in a box

If we barely understand ourselves, what good will your judgment bring?

This village grows stronger, yet every day is something else

This village will haunt us, we cannot unclaim the labels shot onto our foreheads

Questions for ICE Agents Who Murder

Lisa Wujnovich

Behind that mask, who did your lips last kiss?
Are your parents, proud, alive, have health care?
How long ago did your family cross borders?
Were you beaten as a child?
Are you a commando wannabe, video game hero?
Have you killed before?
Were you a soldier?
Did you miss the adrenaline rush?
Do you punch your wife, slap your girlfriend,
throw your children against walls?
Where were you last employed? When?
Are you empowered? A void filled
with the weight of new boots, vests, and weapons?
Are there crying babies at home to feed?
Is your heart a rush-hour,
your mind tracked underground?
Do you pray? Believe in David versus Goliath?
Is freedom a contact sport in your concussed brain?
Do you cheer for The Joker instead of Batman?
Are you rooted in a small town or a sky-scraper city?
A lone house in an open pasture?
Are you a drifter—luxuriating in the Marriott?
When you yank and wrestle a child, woman,
old man to pavement, do your rootlets strain,
snap? What let go when you shot and continued
to shoot? Whose back, whose face exploded?
Your father's, mother's, lover's, your own?

Chattering Cockatoos

Barbara Anger

Some with the title commander

Sleep in beds

With 500 count sheets

Enjoy perfect coffee

Abandon open hearts

Let violence rain

On girls reading books

On people praying

On people fleeing

Under explosive booms

Screams and sounds

Of coughing

Unheard, lost

Lost to the feel of sun

Too dark for shadows

Forgotten by chattering

Big chested cockatoos

Boasting of winning

NE Birth Pains

Ron Barr

The King of England, George the Third
 With heavy hand decreed
 Taxes firing the shot soon heard
 Worldwide of British Greed

They stood neck deep in debt
 Since they'd overplayed their hand
 The War with France Had not turned out
 The way that they had planned.

Despite inheriting vast new tracts
 Of French Canadian lands
 The Seven Year War with France Left them
 Severely undermanned

The Colonists did not care much
 For the taxes that soon occurred
 Dumping tea chests in the Bay
 What followed next? The Massacre

Rumors rife of retribution
 Spread gladly by the people
 Revere and Dawes were then tasked with
 Keeping eyes upon the steeple

Lexington and Concord rolled on
 Following their ride
 Guerilla tactics took its toll on
 Red shirts they couldn't hide

Saratogas heavy cannon
 Boomed out the Rebel cause
 Herkimers' foiling of the 3 Prong Plan
 Would give the British pause

Brooklyn and Manhattan torched
 The Mighty Hudson Chained
 While Washington at Valley Forge
 Found his troops were nearly drained

A boatrip cross the Delaware
 A needed win at Trenton
 The Brits proclaimed their ramparts there
 Could ne'er be put a dent in

Aid from Europe came just when
The outlook seemed most dire
LaFayette, Kosciusko and von Steuben
Would reignite the fire

Francis Marion, renegade Swamp Fox
Ethan Allen's Green Mount Boys
Would eventually put the locks
On Cornwallis' Hessian Ploys

'No Kings' we proved with our just cause
The Founders then insist
There shall be NO STATE RELIGION
Today many still resist

Now find ourselves once again
On the verge of a church run state.
Have we still not learned the lesson then?
Will we make the same mistake?

Amerika

Kelly Shaw

A dream and an enchantment,
a new way of life, a new way
of being human. Will there
be humans there?

A mad hope, delirious
with golden fever, and afflicted
with the sleep of the sleepless,
where dreams and treasure
are in equal measure elusive.

Squirrels in her branches, leaping
from tree to tree, from coast
to coast without touching
the ground it turns out.

Stifled. Stymied. You didn't
know what to expect. Whelmed,
now worlds apart. World enough
you were taught.

Look at you standing there agape.
There's the other. There's always
the other. It's as if she breathes
what suffocates you. Your hunger,
entirely foreign to her.

Her way confoundingly
without roads or inns,
and before you know it,
without a landscape, or
perhaps those to witness it.

How can one recognize her?
By the quality of her rain.
By the presence of her creatures.
Sasquatch peering at you
like a little drop led astray.

For you arrived with curiosity,
but without awe, rolling
your eyes at the chestnut trees
towering above you.

What I could do with them
you surmised, disabling you
from seeing the twinkle-eyed
sprite in party-colored hues
lounging on a mossy rock.

There you are, standing on
the precipice of a deep valley,
an eagle circling above,
some caribou grazing below.

Did you sense or glimpse
the primordial holy hush,
or did it slip by while you took
an order, gave instruction
or reached for your weapon?

After all, you were
institutionalized for believing
you could live like a Mayan
for 700 years and then dissolve
into a rainbow light body.

After all, we pretend to adjust
to the way the machine modifies
our mornings into tangles of caffeine,
once nicotine, once morphine,
once Josephine.

After all, cancelled plans, empty seats
and soft lighting create sweet salivations
for the introvert.

After all, the irresponsible advances
of prog- and glam-rock shine a gorgeous
cataclysmic light in the rearview window.

After all, a neurotic fails through incessant
vacillation, whereas an artist succeeds
in giving shape and form to confusion
while channeling portals within sonic patterns.

After all, a compendium of wonders
is fiercely girded by the fragrances
hitherto free from the polluted air
of progress.

After all, esoterics are sometimes so sharp
they'd be clichés, if only the right people
were in charge.

After all, the time of meditators
breaking through the threshold
and tipping the scales
is wholly unpredictable.

After all, the psychosis of lobbying
for expendable humans occurs
primarily above a certain tax bracket
and below a certain grade level.

After all, the amalgamation
of marketed medicines comingling
is a dizzying and dreadful roulette
even for the billionaire set.

After all, Elmer is the perfect
household God for those who
can't wait to get up in the morning
and start sticking things together.

After all, plastic easter basket grass
in mega-stores is far from the verge
of going out of style, while indigenous
souvenirs remind you that Yeshua was
a tantric bridegroom who overturned tables.

After all, if this had been titled Museum
Gift Shop, it still wouldn't swallow
and reabsorb the kitsch display.

After all, it's tired donkeys who enable
lumbering, panicky behemoths
in the interval of distant eyes.

After all, the speakers don't have time
for intelligence or making connections
while the bathroom mirror reflects
razor blades, amphetamines and aspirin.

After all, the orator sprays grotesque
sticky fumes over you while you pine
for a blimp.

After all, who needs a deep dive

when the surface is doing
all the talking.

After all, diction and tone decide
eligibility, for the snowman, whose chakras
are shriveled and shivering, allows nothing
but the overlaying of restoration stagecraft.

After all, the Macbeths have pseudo-
perfected the presentation of appearing
as mice in gold jackets, rather than eels
with Ketamine needles.

After all, at this point Sophocles
and Shakespeare hand the story over
to Alfred Jarry and Andy Kaufman.

After all, the selfies of hoarding dramaturgs
are sputtering while foresworn streetlights
short-circuit on haunted turnpikes.

After all, not since Jane Goodall went
to the jungle have we made such effort towards
comprehending a mystifying population.

After all, by a significant margin, women
hiking would rather encounter a bear
than a man.

After all, with a wink, bludgeon or
a multi-generational agenda, fathers
tell their sons, You've got to be a killer.

After all, a few thought the Iroquois
had some pretty good ideas, in theory.
After all, before pastors climbed the sky
and brass woke to become bugles, bees
stumbled drunkenly out of peonies.

its insides cleared out
so its outlook can be carved
a jack-o-lantern

Volatile Organic Compounds

Fox Henry Frazier

Hounds and humans together hunt fox, auburn or silver beauty known to slaughter iridescent pheasant and sweet white rabbit, which grace the plates of wooden dining tables. Even gentle herbivores savor the flesh of flora, which we now know screams when cut. Chewing sounds create a defensive response in vegetation, secretions known as volatile organic compounds the better to bitter their taste. Plants release airborne chemicals, when threatened warning other, nearby plants of imminent danger. The truth is every human eats the flesh of something sentient. Sanguinarians are quick to point this out, in defense of their own prideful notions regarding orthodox traditions of vampirism. Daywalkers find this appalling (naturally) preferring to consume life-force energy and red velvet cake (vegan). I am trying to tell you that it should have surprised none of us as the Abhartach rose to power saying things like

she had blood coming out of her eyes blood

coming out of her wherever that sanguinarians came out to celebrate him & his triumphs as their own and witches steeled themselves for the hunt. Or that that militia germinated under harsh white glare of his relentless surveillance *Sanguinarians Never Offer Warmth* began snatching *bloodbags* off the street, from homes schools workplaces bars parks houses of worship black-masked jackets emblazoned *Blood in our mouths, SNOW in our veins* because this thirst is a language with many dialects Daywalkers gathered in the streets, got staked burned witches gathered in nature homes secret libraries held hands set lights gave money delighted in nude sculptures of the Abhartach displayed in public parks standard tiny hands & penis fighting to surface through its bright embarrassing pool of yellow pubic hair. Foxes began to run wild, stealing bread smashing expensive vases leaving hopeful paths of crushed crust and glass spitting pebbles calling witches to scatter crumbs as though casting sustenance to corvid oracles & through our shared air strains of a new murder ballad floating invisible steel strings building those first glittering bars opening us into what

The Butternut Valley Remembers, 1776-2026

Julene Waffle

Before it was Morris or Garrettsville,
the land already had a name, Tienuderrah--
a river speaking its own language,
running clear between hills thick with butternuts.
Liberty was just a seed.

Before boundaries hardened into towns,
this valley learned sacrifice early. Mothers clung
to doorframes so they would not sink to their knees
as they sent sons and husbands to fight
for allegiances whispered, not worn.

And the women stayed--
turned soil, milked cows,
ran businesses with blistered palms.
They steadied families with hot meals
and lullabies threaded with promise.

Militia gathered where roads
were little more than mud and memory,
leaning toward places history would name
Oriskany, Saratoga, Cherry Valley,
where the cost of freedom inked its blood.

Sons like Holden, Lull, and Starr stepped forward.
Jacob Morris held fast
to his Founding Father's legacy
in cipher and his leatherbook, in invisible ink--
the quiet tools of an aide-de-camp.

Liberty has deep roots, and the valley remembers--
in cemetery stones, in family names grown old.
It recalls them in the way the morning fog settles low,
a blanket of reverence, a history rising
in the script of mist.

Blood Moon

Robert Luce

The Blood Moon rose over the new born war,

Sent by an angry God, it traveled east to west through the never ending night.

Passing over all nations, mocking their useless borders as it went, it finally settled over mine.

Long ago the Blood Moon was sent to settle over a vast primal land.

And there, by forest, prairie, mountain and canyon was proclaimed "This will be the land of the people's Revolution."

So came the children, those of the enlightenment, those of the ships of bondage, and those of the buffalo. And in the fertile destiny of that land, as seeds blown across a meadow, they offered their blood to one another.

It was by this struggle that all shades of human kind broke bread together. And, in so doing, all that each had to offer was fused together into a common soul. This is how the children of far flung distant lands became the people of this land.

There was a man; a man of enlightenment, a man of privilege. And in that land of fertile destiny, by the promise of the new moon, this man sat down to his secretary, took quill to parchment and composed a little note to the King. The words in that correspondence would become the covenant of the people, of those who came before and those to come. And so by the weight of those words the great experiment did commence.

If only to recall the truths held in those words. That all are created equal. That the inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness is the inheritance granted by a benevolent God to all people.

For in this land, as in all lands, the blood moon reveals the vanity of borders. And the new moon, by an ever flowing diaspora, fills in the spaces between privilege and bondage, between what was and what is. And with the proclamation of newly held truths there is no longer the "Us and Them". There is now only the "Us".

There in lies the people's revolution!

And so, who are we to question, to struggle, to learn, to relearn and repeat. Who are we to act as control over our living experiment.

The blood moon knows.

The new moon knows.

We are the people!

In the Matriarchy

Shelby Cohen

In the matriarchy, we aren't choosy
about this womb or that
We pull up a chair, make you a plate
leave a light on, offer a squeeze
You get it: we all fam

And we can have that
circular, balanced filial
Wisdom ascending, sovereignty individual
Thoughts and prayers and curious stares
choosing peace and protection, the priority

A more public republic
letting the earth reclaim us
Sheltering the weak with soft-strong hands
clasped and focused on the future
Promise absent since they gave us a word for the apocalypse

If you hate that which raised you
it might be you, not her
Sure, every garden grows thorns
but even the thinnest soil cradles seeds
There is no such thing as a self-made man

The dismantling won't break us down
it makes room for community to bloom
A society elevating safety, decentering scarcity
Where kindness is rewarded, intimidation collapses
Every soul, the blueprint for paradise

In the Course of Human Events

Mary Pat Hyland

The TV beamed trauma into my childhood:

Napalmed girl fleeing naked;
 Teen shrieking over slain student;
 Bullets silencing a King.

They're black and white memories now,
 Always narrated by Dan Rather.

Our school's "cool nun" taught us songs of protest
 Guthrie, Dylan, Baez, and we'd
 harmonize together—Peter, Paul & Mary-style.
 Too young to comprehend their full meaning,
 Too young to appreciate our First Amendment right.

The iPhone beams trauma into my adulthood:

Schoolchildren fleeing masked men;
 Wife screaming by slain activist;
 Courts silencing American rights.

It's vivid full-color reality now,
 Often narrated by podcasters.

Minnesotans teach us songs of protest
 Guthrie, Springsteen, Baez, and we
 Harmonize together—hearts broken from afar.
 We comprehend deeply their full meaning,
 We sing to appreciate our First Amendment right.

History is repeating, but this time
 its dagger twists deeper.

The morning after the No Kings III protest
 I read the Declaration of Independence and
 was stunned to realize that
 something written 250 years ago
 warns succinctly of the very man
 who would be King George today!

Everything the forefathers fought against
 Has been turned into his playbook:

Refusing assent to laws;
Fatiguing representatives into compliance;
Obstructing naturalization of foreigners;
Making judges depend on his will alone.
The parallels go on and on, making
one wonder, were the forefathers psychic?

When in the course of our current human events
It becomes necessary for one people
to dissolve a widespread path of corruption,
will we need to declare our independence again?
Not from a foreign entity this time,
but from a grifting enemy within.

A No Kings III photo captured
Joan Baez resting her chin
on the shoulder of Jane Fonda.
Two outspoken voices of my youth sixty years ago
still speaking truth to power.
Jane's smile shows pride at the turnout;
but Joan's pensiveness hints at
the many miles to go
before they sleep.

After 250 years, America,
with quite mixed results,
what do you think?
Should we give matriarchy a try?

Grand Experiment

Meghan D. Coates

Our neighbors to the north acquired their freedom
 By way of request--
 They are polite.
 We are not.
 Everything in this country was born awash in blood--
 The Grand Experiment eats people.
 After all, at the end of an experiment
 The subjects are sacrificed to scientific spirits,
 Martyrs on the altar of the nation--
 Who will be devoured then?
 And how many in-between?

Revolution runs in our plasma,
 Separable only by apheresis,
 Donatable,
 Heritable,
 Transmissible--
 There are many ways to catch it.
 It boils the blood
 And broils the heart
 And has from the start.

We were born out of violence
 And a desire to avoid taxes--
 Sound familiar?
 America never relaxes,
 Despite what you may think.
 The guns are an undercurrent,
 The currency our God;
 The first are always thirsting, ravenous,
 The second always draining
 From pockets and checkbooks and accounts,
 Always draining
 The way a corpse does
 When you hang it upside down.

America is born in the Boston Massacre,
 In the burning of the Gaspee,
 In the shot heard 'round the world--
 America's birth certificate may be
 The Declaration of Independence,
 But what they never told you
 Is that the ink of independence is the ichor of ideals, and
 The same ichor streams from the eye-cores

Of Lady Liberty
 As she beholds her tired,
 Her poor,
 Her huddled masses
 Stolen from her breast
 Even as she nurses them--
 Beaten, shot, dumped in the sea,
 Interned, interred, interrogated and seen
 Rotting in the camps of dysentery.

Our conception was the moment
 Columbus impregnated the land
 With Europeans--the deadliest strain
 Until the Grand Experiment
 Invented the American Brain,
 The greatest bane
 To the foreign veins
 From which we extract our healthiest fluids.

There are animals--
 Snakes,
 Birds,
 Lizards,
 Maybe even people--
 Who self-reproduce,
 Parthenogenesis,
 A kind of cloning,
 Courtesy of nature.

America is pregnant.
 It is gravid and heavy and round,
 It is staring at the hole in the ground
 Wondering which of the twins inside it
 Will tear its way out first,
 And whether they or America
 Will wind up under Earth--
 America is pregnant with itself,
 With its two selves,
 And they will eat their way out
 Like a wasp incubated in prey,
 While America prays,
 Seeking a salvation
 That is ruin.

We are ruined.
 We will be ruins.

Or we could be something stronger.

We could learn from our past
 How to make a land last,
 Extract from our histories
 Answers to the mysteries
 Of how a people leads themselves
 Out of devastation,
 Out of desperation,
 Out of the separation
 Between classes,
 Races,
 Genders,
 Sexes--
 Constructs all.

Redemption comes with restitution,
 Reparations,
 Recompense--
 We must repair the past
 To make a way for the future,
 Must pay for our crimes,
 Scrub away the dirt and grime,
 On hands and knees we climb
 To the utmost heights of
 This gold-bricked ziggurat
 Whereupon America
 Will either make birth-giving sounds...
 Or smelt it all to the ground,
 Building itself
 By gilding itself--
 Or gilding itself,
 Becoming one with the gold,
 With the beautiful gold,
 With the beautiful, God-given, accursed gold--
 If we all sit still, America will be bought and sold.

This is not a time for apathy,
 We cannot approach this fractiously,
 We must all as one remember
 That the fight for change and freedom--
 That is holy.
 That is sacred. Isn't that what we were taught in school,
 About the deified beings we called the Founding Fathers?

So in the name of our origins,
 I say release us from the cage,
 And either sacrifice us all for the Grand Experiment,

Or let us all run free,
To embody the spirit of our nation
By seizing what is ours,
Destroying class and station,
Embrace the revolution,
Reject complicit stagnation:
We are all stained in blood,
We are in America's womb,
Will you all sign America's tomb,
Telling a harrowing story,
Fully gory,
Full-baked glory;

Or,
Tell me, America:
Are you a Tory?

Garden Duplex *after Jericho Brown*

Cynthia Holick Foley

I water our garden plot on July 4th,
a day to celebrate freedom. I think

a day to celebrate freedom. I think
are we free? Who are slave holders today?

Are we free? Who are slave holders today?
Who builds Detention “camps” to hold migrants?

Who builds Detention “camps” to hold migrants?
Migrants who came here for a better life.

Migrants who came here hoping to be free
Rounded up like slaves were rounded up

Rounded up like slaves, ripped from families,
Deported to prisons, stacked in cells

Stacked in cells, denied basic rights and comforts.
This July 4th water our parched garden plot.

We Go Live!

JC Roberts

The pissing on each other starts as the newscaster details,
The high cost of:
eggs, entitlement, diversity, inclusion, scientific research, and being vegan,
“Why don’t you eat meat? You too good for steak?”

Sitting between two friends, waiting for beers and lunch to appear.
No phones allowed when we visit, like all those past years.
Just conversation and catch-up.
Gone are the days of “The Mets suck,” and “Philly don’t even deserve a ball team.”
Quiet spaces are more dangerous now than an unlocked gun safe.
Even between lifelong souls.

In the middle, always the quiet, non-confrontational one.
The trio's sounding board.
A single beer is placed in front of me.
Bartender salutes me, blesses me with the sign of the cross.
Eyes, from both sides, bore holes in me.
Opposing sides close ranks.
I feel the wave rise, crashing on the shore of my beliefs
Beliefs we once shared.
Dividing the ranks, I fire one shot.

Remember that song, “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised”
This one will be!
I'm tired of standing like Rosa Parks, waiting for a seat.
Trying to jam a sliver of logic between your congealed brain waves
Tired of standing for Right, Left, or Mr. In Between.

Tired of believing the veiled lies of,
"This is the Truth, I promise."
No more war, take care of people first, politics later.
We all deserve compassion, security, and something to believe in.

Tired of medicine being bad. Science, research, help,
Bad!
Me, you, them,
BAD!
We're all tired, yet we've been asleep for years.

You don't want war? Blood must be spilled.
You want peace? Blood must be spilled.
Education? Not for them.
Blood must be spilled

Safer food, Better life, Quality relationships, Smarter kids
Kinder neighbors? A kinder world?
We need louder voices and sharper minds!
We need to remember the life we were given.
The blood spilled through lives sacrificed.

What have we learned?
When all we do is blame.
When all we do is emulate power, money, madness,
pretending, "It's the American Way."
Pontificating, Postulating, presuming prayer and penis size really matter.
I'm still haunted by television shadows of Kent State.
Bobby's brains and Martin's heart, alone in glorious technicolor.
I'm tired and We've Learned Nothing!

My glass is empty.
Quiet spaces are more dangerous now than an unlocked gun safe.
Even between lifelong souls.

After Pretti After Good

Nanci Rose-Ritter

I awakened mourning
 Snow falling steadily
 Lightly a man gunned
 on ICE street lawlessly
 worse than wildest west
 this hateful cruel greasy
 hot Shame full exertion
 Spun to protect a power
 fostering chaotic divide.
 - Simple as his corpse -
 lying dead no comforting
 people gather frozen in
 shock shouting disbelief
 over sanctioned impunity
 This after an aligned mom
 shot in her car in her head.

Readying to be yet bolder
 it's already civil war cold.
 resolved against familiar
 Race bait supremacist blitz:
 snatch kindergarteners
 anyone to meet quotas
 commission, redaction
 merchandise. Charging
 we are on one only side
 together with not a thing
 other than them or right
 opposed to wrongness
 of flat disregard. Friends
 dehumanized, whites not
 so privileged now. Senators
 scientists performing artists
 be quashed; everyLatino/a
 targeted go Back of Bus
 Don't Drink fountain as if
 it wasn't the same water.

They evade investigation
 or allow proper channels

to uncover obvious truths
Who will I hide in my attic
risk our lives in affirmation
of the Never-Again spoken
for decades? After a tyrant
took over the government
we can't trust at all; caring
for no one just self-interest.

We stand today in frigid air
Not unafraid. Strengthened
resolved: We who so believe
in letting go won't let this slide.
When I can't read or sit quietly
or put seed in a feeder or eat
without grieving strangers dead
disappeared injured left behind
Hearts withstanding in witnessing
what couldn't / can't be fathomed
Be sure in solidarity we shall arise
unified in intensive condemnation
of blatant grotesque aggression

Ode to America

Veronica Shedden

Glory Glory! To all our fore Fathers of this great Nation for you deserve the first honors. For the last 250 years we have all enjoyed the Freedom from the crown and their strong resistance. Thanks to men like Thomas Paine writing a pamphlet that made “common sense” For our time was ripe for our independence. We celebrate men like Washington, Jefferson, Adams, and Benjamin Franklin. And a few other good old boys who formed a committee giving Washington the will and might to fight for our Freedom. It was brutal and they half starved to death beating down the Red Coats, but they got up again to push through the corn fields of Pennsylvania.

711 as he was known started the Culper spy ring right under their nose. With a rugged bunch of fellows, one a farmer, boater and a tavern owner. The slickest of the bunch was someone the Brits trusted, the foxy Robert Townsend, who had favor with top ranking red coats. We thank them all, especially the ones who suffered and died. Lest they not die in vain for this was all for the greater good, for we are the proud and the free who live by the constitution in which we hold high and may never abuse it.

Oh, the great American way the world looks at us to lead with dignity and fairness. We are all brothers and sisters in this vast realm. So stay with our forefathers instructions, to not dishonor in which they had sewn like a strong suit of Armor.

Stolen Symbol

Diane Hamblin

Lately I feel like my flag has been stolen
 People wave it or wear it, claim it as theirs
 Belonging only to those who believe as they do
 See our country, our history
 Through only their eyes
 Excluding voices who disagree, and any who
 Appear different, believe different
 Or maybe my flag has been torn apart by division
 Angry voices on opposite sides
 That point fingers of blame instead of
 Joining hands in the unity this flag represents
 Yes, both narrow views have stolen my flag.

What seems to be lost is seeing this flag
 As the symbol, the very fabric of our country,
 Diversity stitched together
 From the very beginning.
 Thirteen stripes for colonies,
 Beginning as separate, joining as one
 Seeking liberty and freedom from kings.
 Field of stars growing in number, as a nation grew
 Welcoming those who fled their old home
 And found promise of new life here -
 In a blue field large enough to hold,
 Welcome each newcomer, each new star.

Perhaps it feels stolen because many who wave it
 Are trying to erase part of its history,
 Forgetting that it is fabric from cotton
 Picked by black enslaved hands
 And stitched by women, disenfranchised.
 Forgetting this flag was carried across a new nation
 By immigrants laying a railroad, connecting a continent,
 Even when told they didn't belong.
 Forgetting those who were already here, pushed to the side.
 But when called, our flag has been carried by soldiers
 Of all colors, religions, races and genders
 Serving as one, believing in that symbol of unity.

And so over time laws met the ideals
 To include everyone in the founding goals
 Of equality and liberty, not perfect, but growing.
 So I say to all those who fly this symbol -
 Or wear it, or hug it and claim it as theirs.
 Those who think only some can belong
 Who seek to divide, not unite,
 Like this is some clubhouse with rules of exclusion,
 A flag for some, but not all -
 Face to face in anger, unwilling to listen.

Yes, this flag may be yours, but it is all of ours too
And though it's been stolen, we all want it back.

Emma Mahon

I think about the tens of thousands of starving children overseas

Meanwhile my child tends to our garden;

Greeting bumblebees and butterflies as they stop to feast
on our blooming phlox and snapdragons.

“Three bombs were dropped last night”,

A headline reads.

Another one,

“A once-in-a-lifetime natural disaster has occurred for several years in a row”:

A one-line synopsis reporting catastrophes appear instantly, endlessly,

As notifications on my mobile phone,

While my child waters newly transplanted starters,

Encouraging them to drink and grow,

Blissfully unaware of the irreparable trauma being inflicted upon others just like him;

Those, who, in what seems like another life, may have done the same

In their parents’ gardens.

I am sorry that this world seems like a disaster--

Full of greed, corruption,

War, death, and even microplastics.

But--as long as we have each other, here in our garden,

Perhaps we can cultivate a world with a different future--

Or at least one with more greens and flowers.

Sweet Liberty

Holly Mason

In my life I've voted republican, democratic, independent, libertarian and green.
Power of choice, living in a land, that's free,
It's the strength of the people that let's us be.
As citizens of a united republic, we are not bound to rule, by a lawless, regime.

A congress that fails to uphold the laws of our constitution is accountable to the people they serve.
Each of us equal under the law, none above.
We will not let them destroy this country we love.
Those who participate in this perversion of power, should anticipate the bitter taste of their just deserts.

Only in our shared experience, will we find our reason to be, when we recover our ability to put love over hate.
When we value human decency once, again,
We will realize real courage lies within.
While we still have a fighting chane, breath untaxed, let us step up, and speak out, and rise up and reclaim, all that truly makes us great.

We remember, respect, and honor the price paid, and blood shed, by those who made us.
Our forefathers got it right, "from many, one."
By the will of the people, it will be done.
Tyrants can't defeat us, when we stand together, in each other, place our trust.

In order to preserve and ensure the survival of "a more, perfect union,"
"We, the people," must defend our liberty,
Learn from the hard lessons of our history.
For our ancestors, for our children's, children, we embrace our next, revolution!

"Home of the brave, land of the free," all that was, and will ever be!

Claiming a Memory

Nina Svereika

My mother came to this country because of a war.

wait

no

sorry—

an “armed conflict”

Immortalized as a scar of black granite,
carved by an uncredited Chinese architect.

You forget us, U.S.

The millions of immigrants who connected this country

Coast to coast

Forced to live on the outskirts

Barred from entering based on place of origin alone

You took our wings at Angel Island,

Trapping us in camps

wait

no

sorry—

“War relocation centers”

as if it was a vacation

and not a scapegoat for your fears.

You are afraid of us, U.S.

You blame pandemics on us.

You say that we are superior—

a “model minority” that needs to be stopped,
that others need to live up to.

In doing so you ignore the pain

that you have caused us

and the difficulties that we face.

You go so far as to praise things

you were once disgusted by:

our cuisine

our traditions

Food that once made me the subject of ridicule
becomes gentrified into something basic—

for boring white people who want to appear cultured.

You want us to forget.

You try to bury our history.

We will not let you take any more than you have already taken.

We stand our ground

and claim our place in this land that we helped build.

Stripes and Stars

Aaron Miller

Unknown to the esteemed signatories
Of the Declaration of Independence, Westward,
in what would soon be the United States,
Lay deep, endless forests and sweeping plains
And spans of vast snow-capped mountain ranges.
They would be crossed, when at all, and at risk,
On foot, and back of horse, and wagon train,
For just seventy years before a bridge
Of iron was wrought to span the continent.
That first great step in its earliest form
Did not even make it to thirty years.
The plans had been prepared long before
The first tie was laid and sledgehammer swung.
They would upgrade, replace, reroute the track.
Newer metals, better cast, and low grades
From paths tunneled fresh through the ancient stone.
When nineteen turned twenty, likely no trace
Of the first-laid crude-wrought line would be found.
Another seventy years on, and man,
Not content with the land or even sky,
Tubes of aluminum flying through air
Already becoming mundane, the norm,
Turned gaze further upward, never blinking
To the heavens, regarding them anew -
Not as ornaments of the veil of night,
but a destination.

Enemy of the State

Emilia Erard aka Ms. Information

The eyes perceive what they believe
 Clinging Naive Fiends
 Hesitate, we deliberate
 Indoctrinate, they incriminate

Quit Knocking on the Door

Quit Knocking on the Door

My needs are destined for debate
 Old men, envy where I urinate
 Genderless bathrooms are my escape
 That's why I'm an enemy of the state

My business is not your business
 Who cares where I piss
 Who cares if I'm cis
 My business is not your business

Quit Knocking on the Door

Quit Knocking on the Door

The potty police'll tell you their lies
 About the stall with a monster inside
 But their disguise is used to spread hate
 That's why they're an enemy of the state

My Business | My Business

My Business is not your business

I'm not an enemy, A
 Not an enemy, A
 Not an Enemy, A
 Enemy of the State

My Business | My Business

My Business is not your business

My Business | My Business

My Business is not your business

What more can I say to satiate the swarm
Why transform but still perform in vain
Our persecution will proceed the same
But you'd never guess I'm

Not an enemy, A
Not an enemy, A
Not an Enemy, A
Enemy of the State

My Business | My Business

My Business is not your business

I'm not an enemy, A
Not an enemy, A
Not an Enemy, A
Enemy of the State

Freedom in Nature

Jeffery Torres

I

There is freedom in nature;
It is nature, human nature, to be free.

Who walked these lands
Along the river sands
Before arrival of *Half Moon*?¹

Was it not the Mohawk and Mohican?

Of these near relations I shall speak
As I climb a metaphorical peak.

I look to the sky and want to fly
Like the eagle.²

A walk among the trees
In the grace of a summer breeze
Brings thoughts to a higher elevation.

In nature there is sensation, beauty, and revelation:
“Man’s heart away from nature,” Standing Bear said, “becomes hard.”³
Therefore, let nature be one’s Bard.

An Arapaho⁴ saying:
“Plants talk to us; and if we listen, we can hear them.”
Allow nature to give;
Breathe free and live.

II

There is freedom in nature;
It is nature, human nature, to be free.

*We hold these truths to be self-evident...*⁵

Jean-Jacques Rousseau spoke of man in a “state of nature.”⁶
In his first estate, man was savage, but free.

In this theory, man was elevated by a “social compact”:
Rights relinquished in exchange for order afforded by government.

Social philosophers had a sliding scale on which liberties were retained,⁷
One where balance was not always attained.

In the world of ideas, it was Hobbes v. Locke
 And fury on the dock –
 The Boston Tea Party!

“All men are created equal,” an erudite man proclaimed⁸
 As freedom was heroically declaimed.

It is telling that the first fatality of the American Revolution
 Was a man named Crispus Attucks,
 A sailor of mixed race, African and Native American.

The Declaration was a proclamation so simple, yet complex,
 That among the signatories was a man named William Whipple,⁹
 Compelled by conscience to free his own slave, Prince.

Among the Revolutionaries was Thaddeus Kosciuszko,
 After whom a bridge is named in Albany.¹⁰

And let us not forget Chaim Solomon,
 A man who helped fund the Revolution,
 Yet died impoverished and mostly forgotten.

So revolutionary was Colonial victory
 That “World Turned Upside Down”
 was played at the British surrender at Yorktown.

*In order to form a more perfect Union...*¹¹

We continue to strive,
 And one day we will arrive.

III

There is freedom in nature;
 It is nature, human nature, to be free.

Freedom takes many forms
 As it surveys the norms...

In freedom of thought
 In freedom of expression
 In freedom of speech
 In freedom of song
 In freedom of dance
 In freedom of LOVE¹² –
 The very poetry of life.

I have a dream!

A towering man once said.¹³

To go beyond ivory and ebony,¹⁴

There is communion in affinity...

Will you dance with me?

1 *Halve Maen* (Half Moon) was the ship of Henry Hudson, which sailed up the river named after him. The mariner sailed as far as present-day Albany. Among the Mohican, that river was called the *Mahicannituk*, which means “waters that are never still.”

2 In American Indian conception, a flying eagle symbolizes an approach to and affinity with the Creator.

3 Luther Standing Bear (1868-1939) was a Lakota philosopher, educator, author, and actor who accompanied Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show.

4 The Arapaho are a Plains tribe that lived historically in present-day Wyoming and Colorado.

5 These words are found in the Declaration of Independence.

6 Among Rousseau’s works: *A Discourse on the Sciences and Arts*, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, *Emile*, *The Social Contract*, *Discourse on Political Economy*, *The Confessions*, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, *Rousseau: Judge of Jean-Jacques*, *Julie or the New Heloise*, and *Dictionnaire de Musique*.

7 Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) asserted the individual must surrender all rights to an absolute sovereign. Rousseau (1712-78) maintained rights are created by the body politic. John Locke (1632-1704) believed rights are preexisting and granted by G-d. Locke’s thoughts are echoed in the Declaration of Independence.

8 Thomas Jefferson wrote these stirring words in the Declaration of Independence. As a young lawyer, Jefferson’s first case defended a slave’s right to be free. Alas, the Founding Father did not fully live out his ideals. (This can be said of us all. Moreover, so many of us succumb to *Presentism*, judging the past through the lens of the present.)

9 William Whipple (1730-85), a towering figure in New Hampshire commerce and politics, contributed to the victory at Yorktown.

10 Tadeusz Kościuszko (1746-1817) was a Polish general, engineer, and revolutionary who designed state-of-the-art fortifications, including those at West Point. Kościuszko’s efforts contributed to the victory at Yorktown. So passionate was Kosciuszko for freedom, that he established a fund for the education of freed slaves. The man has been memorialized in many ways, both structural and symbolic. One example is the Kosciuszko Bridge in Albany (which is more widely known as “Twin Bridges”). Another example of memorialization is the Kosciuszko Bridge that rises in Brooklyn. Whereas the Albany structure is an arched bridge over the Mohawk River, the more impressive Brooklyn structure is a cable bridge over Newtown Creek. A dignified portrait of Kosciuszko hangs in the Albany Polish Community Center.

11 These words are framed in the opening of the United States Constitution.

12 In *Loving v. Virginia*, the Supreme Court of the United States unanimously struck down laws against miscegenation.

13 In his speech at the Lincoln Memorial in 1963, Martin Luther King, jr. said, “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”

14 “To go boldly where no man has gone before” is an introductory statement in the *Star Trek* television series (1966-69). In one “controversial” scene, white actor William Shatner (as Captain Kirk) defied censors as he kissed black actress Nichelle Nichols (as Lieutenant Uhura). During a period when Nichols was discouraged and threatened to quit the series, Martin Luther King, jr. admonished her to continue because her character projected such a positive role model.

Lincoln's Address in the Bardo

To Our Better Selves

Gerard Johnson

Twelve score and ten years ago,
An experiment in living was created.

Let Freedom Ring!

conceived in liberty
for those white propertied males.

Let Freedom Ring?

dedicated to the proposition that
we have the right to freely assemble.

Let Freedom Ring?

that all men are created equal
unless you are a brown or black immigrant
without legal standing

Let Freedom Ring?

Now we are engaged in a great civil "conflict"
with ICE on the streets of our cities.

Let Freedom Ring?

testing whether this nation or any nation
shall guarantee the right to be secure in their home
and the right to bear arms.

Let Freedom Ring?

so conceived and so dedicated
to basic human rights

Let Freedom Ring?

can long endure.
when accountability and transparency are denied

Let Freedom Ring?

We are met on a great battlefield

Wishing for civil engagement

Let Freedom Ring?

and we dedicate a portion of this field

to those who marched and those who couldn't

Let Freedom Ring?

for those who gave their lives

in the belief of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteen amendments

shall live their Truth

Let Freedom Ring?

we can not consecrate—we can not hallow

This sacred space for those who died

in the pursuit of their voting rights and

the right to live as they are

Let Freedom Ring?

The brave living and dead, have consecrated it,

theirs was a battle hard fought—not yet won.

Let Freedom Ring?

we take increased devotion to that cause

of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness

Let Freedom Ring?

that this nation under God

respects all people of faith with no exceptions

Let Freedom Ring?

that government of the people, by the people and for the people

will live up to the journey of our best ideals

Let Freedom Ring?

shall not perish from the earth

because of all of you and our forebears

for whom this experiment in living was created

Let Freedom Ring!

Lady Liberty Speaks

Beth Kovacs

Be warned my people.
 Be warned.
 This is a hard Country
 A forgetful Country,
 a Country that can exact retribution if
 you dare to challenge it.
 Remember who you are and
 Where you came from.
 Do not allow anyone to make
 you feel undeserving of a home.

Beware of this Country!
 This is a Country fraught with difficulties,
 lacking in empathy.
 Pay attention!
 Help each other, school your children on how to be patient, how to be
 kind.
 Show them the path so they have a chance to thrive.
 Oui!
 Always work to do more for your children and for all who follow your
 footsteps in this Country!

Go now and once again wake up
 America! It has risen up before and
 No doubt will rise up again.
 Shake up America!
 If you look, you will see history prove
 that America will Not, No!
 It will not fail!
 When people care enough to try.
 When people work together for the benefit of all.
 When people follow the path of love and compassion for all.

Make it so my hopeful, humble children.
 Do not lose yourself in your tears.
 Always look up and remember what
 I, Lady Liberty stand for.
 Light the way for others as I have done for you today.
 Go my children and let your heart and your strength from this day guide
 your path to freedom!

UNCERTAINTY

Wendy R Hovey

No doubt there's trouble out there.
Something's in the air.
Leaves turn over,
pleading with their
pale tongues.
They murmur to each other,
secret whispers.

Songbirds offer vespers to
any who believe.
Worms are not lulled.
Snakes are not fooled.
Impartial osprey observe from the
highest branches.
The fox has carried her
last mouse to her den.
After they nurse, her pups
play with the mouse's tail.

Turkey vultures,
grounded by the darkness,
amuse themselves.
Each claims to know
just how much longer
the earth will turn.

Shrugging Off...

Sharon Bryant

Oh, I wish I could celebrate

America's two hundred and fifty years.

To stand on the sidewalk,

waving a flag and beaming.

Instead, I contemplate

how to shrug off my Americanness

as one does a heavy sweater.

The friction of duality chafes my skin.

I am waiting for an America

that reckons with its past—

the unconscious bias baked into the land,

and the very letters

that form the words we inhabit.

Interrogating silences,

holding space for what can be.

A reclaiming of "We the People."

Poor Contentment

Charlotte Rosvold

Natural light and busy carpools
 Bird songs, bees buzzing and hand-me-down tools
 Paws and hands warmed by firelight
 Breathing in the elixir of night.

The only blue glow hums from the crackling embers
 Nothing to forget, everything to remember
 "The Hard Times are Behind Us" the radio sings
 Hope and contentment tomorrow brings.

Sunrises with you and sleeping cats
 A steaming mug and a vinyl scratch
 Handmade garments with stories and places
 Stitched all through found buttons and laces.

Newspapers and ash trays and secondhand tables
 Storied shelves of far-away tales and close-to-home fables
 Chalkboard writing and wastebasket ball
 An hour spent pacing on a home phone call.

Farm fresh eggs and apples and corn
 My blue picnic basket, your new French horn
 Two neat whiskeys on a Saturday night
 Two black coffees meet the morning light
 Floating weightless down the creek
 Unafraid of the coming week.

A warm and dry place to rest one's bones
 Absent of robotic voices or whirring drones
 A mind set free from fearful constraints
 A healed body that stretches, runs and paints.

Children and horses and mud puddle-kissed hurts
 A family's clothesline flapping faded t shirts
 A room of one's own for every soul
 A ripped and well-used soccer goal.

Broken and lost and patched up dreams
 Carried in pockets of work-worn jeans
 Bare feet patter on dusty wood floors
 Perhaps one can be both content and poor.

Lady Liberty

Nathaniel Houser

Her torch guides us to freedom

Away from the oppression and back to the current summer barbeques with a new custom.

Drinks will be shared over firepits and at festivals

A tribute to all the old men with white wigs and spectacles.

We search for the day when a lady is president. She will guide soldier's home

Soon the leader of a free world will hear the beat of life loudly thumping from a native drum.

The immigrants from Europe were guided overseas in the night by lady liberty's torch.

To a home where we now share sugary iced tea on the back porch.

The ships have landed on the shores of pilgrim's rock

For the last 250 years, to bring us all home to a new American family flock.

A country that was once divided with men killing brothers

Is still divided with children crying over bullets that murdered native mothers.

A country I call my birthplace is also the country of aspiring dreams for all humanity.

We shall preserve our nation under God into the future with love for all of prosperity.

Paradise Machine

Jason C. Smith

To understand it fully, you have to sneak in
the back door of the great theater—
behind the screen that screams
the clever, foul-mouthed new religion.
And to find her, you'll have to get low.
Even lower.

A kid again—
curious and wild, knees pressed heavy
into the jagged cinder of a nation's memory.
Daring and eager, your finger on the trigger of life.

Dive—eyes closed—below the surprisingly thin surface,
where the manipulations suddenly seem ridiculous
and you slip, slip away from the whole modern, damaged parade.

Ride past the outpost where the tombstones hiss and pop
with dispatches from the front—
“Don't forget us!”
Where the aether pulses with revolution
and you can hear the gears of the paradise machine.

She's down still further,
all the way,
among the original sparks,
where the air tastes of iron.
You'll find her there—
Brave, fighting, but withering—nearly forgotten.
A locket clutched in her once-soft hand.
It was a gift before the war.

To understand it fully,
you must envision her new, in the springtime,
before the letters stopped.

Our Remembered Past

Ryan Vanderpool

It is quite strange how the names fold together here:
 Chautauqua, Chemung, Cayuga, Keuka are held against
 Bradford and Mansfield and Norwich and Bath.
 Our whole constellating history is suggested simply
 by the juxtaposing of one name against another.

And these are only the names of counties or towns;
 further layers are added by examining the names of streets:
 Lorenzo or Wisner or Pulaski or O'Hanlon –
 all representing their three-square block ghettos.

But their names are all we have left here –
 there are no Tollund men nor cave paintings nor burial mounds.
 It is well known that the Iroquois predominated the area
 for centuries until their removal – but what came before that?

I have heard stories about mammoth tusks being uncovered
 on the banks of the Chemung after a bad flood;
 in every stream, stones are barnacled over with fossils
 dating back millions of years, to when this was a shallow sea.

Our lakes, well known for their salt and affluence,
 were bulldozed into their beds by retreating glaciers;
 our hills, which once towered higher than the Himalayas,
 now sag under the weight of advancing millennia.

People, thinking themselves sophisticated, will say:
 “We don't have any history – not like they do in Europe.”
 It's true that we won't find the body of Richard III under asphalt here,
 but that doesn't mean we haven't a past buried under the rubbish of time.

Neighbor

Gerek Tupy

Neighbor turns away again
Acclaiming loyalties of other men
His hand shrinks away to shadow
Out it was not long ago

The sign stabbed deep into the Earth
The hat he places above his girth
The screen he watches unending
The messages are sending

Gripping him by the neck
Their words choke up his wreck
A man on a stand whips his heart
Children stand by and bark

Neighbor now belongs to hate
Surrendering his vacant fate
Joined now the cult of old
Believing every lie he's told

Time Keeps Moving

Gillian Fletcher

Memories we carry
Going beyond time.
Hearing a voice
A phrase,
A melody.

You remember
Feeling somber
Reminiscent.

Letting your soul
Wander,
Stray, to a another place
Time.

You cry your tears
Wanting them near
Sadness,
Still in this moment.

But,

The tears will dry,
You will remember the good
Times well spent,
Times of love,
Fun.

Life goes on,
Time moves beyond
This moment,
This feeling will stay
Not always painful,
But it will be there

The Fallacy

Connor Hoffman

The world is a landscape where forests are ridden
 With constant and tangible binary fission
 The paths will unceasingly split like green shoots
 And spiral divergently down different routes
 Through briar and bristle and bramble and thorn
 More path walkers murdered by weather they've worn
 These trails are deadly, these choices take lives
 All paths, bone, and sinew cleaved cleanly by knives
 Stay in the forest, thus outlive the squall
 A tree never burns with no branches at all
 The muse the woodlands often pondered:
 No paths rendered, no paths wandered.

The world is a garden where each sickly rose
 Sprouts from the corpses of those decomposed
 It blooms for a minute and lives for an hour
 Then joins the cult of the mulch-that-was-flower
 The petals and stem alike wither and brown
 The thorns rot to compost and slough from the crown
 Its weaving is shot through by threads of mycelia
 Victim to nature's innate necrophilia
 Clear out the soil and with it these growths
 Purge life to be free of the death that we loath
 These paths that errant thoughts marauded:
 No life tended, no life rotted.

The world is a brothel where all forms of sin
 To some are achievement, to others chagrin
 The scripture paints every alternative stygian
 Desperate to snare you this side of oblivion
 Choking down blood that they claim tastes of wine
 For the sinless debauchery etched in their shrine
 In the hall of atrocities run by society
 Theirs are bleached cleanly away by their piety
 Live only carnally, virtue be shunned
 For god seems to favor his prodigal sons
 The life those preachers find forgiving:
 No vice dying, no vice living.

The world is an addict and we all its nerves
 Each of us prey to withdrawal we deserve
 When calamity from its recesses is dredged
 It leaves us numb, feening to even the edge
 The victims of circumstance stumble the dark
 Robbed of their dignity, brightness, and heart
 And by the cruel wantings of subconscious mind
 All reel with more pain the less solace they find
 Is it really immoral to grant euthanasia
 These vile and suffering mounds of dysplasia?
 The vice to which we all succumbed:
 No pain channeled, no pain numbed.

The world is a symphony written in sounds
 Of gurgling, scraping, and withering drowned
 The notes are engraved in the scars of our culture
 Circle the issue, so prey like a vulture
 As bodies fall into the widening schism
 We stare down the rift of this great cataclysm
 And continue to speak of how awful it's gotten
 The lightly bruised skin of an apple gone rotten
 Only a fascist would call us fanatical
 We are the midline, all else must be radical
 The pain we all dealt, but so often ignored:
 No blood given, no blood gored.

To constrict all the woodland would bring only pain
 A life without risk is a life without gain
 To forgo the flowers would not prevent strife
 The promise of death is the promise of life
 To relish the carnal would cause others sorrow
 For vices of yesterday pain your tomorrow
 The burden of living is not yours to bear
 For pain that is lessened is pain that is shared
 Focus on right, and so drown out the wrongs
 For no sea of static can silence your songs
 It's the blood of every tale enchanted:
 No muse wanted, no muse granted

We Some Of The People

Samuel Maggio

Common Sense, so popular
 It was read aloud
 In taverns and public places
 Today the same sentiments are spoken in muted tones
 And the bravest
 Are labeled
 Radical
 Domestic
 Terrorists

Oh, irony
 Two hundred and fifty years later
 And the serpent eats its own tail
 We, some of the people, see a king
 Others can't wait for the fireworks
 and the tanks!

We hold these truths to be self-evident
 There are those among us who do
 Others cry out in make believe martyrdom,
 Grotesque nationalism,
 And praying as pageantry

Back then,
 thirty percent were
 Willing to fight
 All the rest opposed or shrugged indiGerence
 So, not much has changed.
 Yet, we
 The
 Never in the majority
 Persist

Can we, the ones who persist, lead our fellow Americans
 Toward the common sense of 1776
 Can we convince them to abandon their loyalty to the king?

History says, perchance we bloody can.

History Lesson

Jeanette Knapp

“I vote to give the crown to Caesar!”

The last line of a poem
in my high school English lit book
It gave me chills then.
It gives me chills now.

We slogged through Julius Caesar
baffled by old words and serpentine sentences
repelled by ambitious Cassius
saddened by credulous Brutus
horrified by the senators stabbing Caesar
awed by brilliant, cunning Antony
appalled that history can turn on a moment
and a great republic fall.

After the play, the poem
by a poet I don't remember
a glimpse of a Roman senator
who slept through the session
and the murder
but wakes to the commotion
scrambles up and shouts
“I vote to give the crown to Caesar!”

It gave me chills then.
It gives me chills now.

Return Voyage - Crossing

Suzanne S. Rancourt

Would you say their language is harsh?
 Passport. Where are you traveling to. Who are you with.
 Clipped & curt like bargain earbuds that lose
 the first consonant before a digraph in a syllabic structure -
 words like shark, chain, fail, stay, cool -
 or an AI altered video its mechanisms alien and illegal
 stuttering in their lack of human cognition and empathy -
 Remember empathy?

What is conversion?
 Into, out of, this for that, quid pro quo -
 What is understanding?

In Inipi Ceremony, 4th round, we leave our relatives
 with a song of "Good Visit" singing them back
 to their origins like in the old days
 when people would come for Sunday visits in person
 us kids playing 'til sunset and we'd walk our visitors
 out into the dooryard, out to their car, "Good visit" we'd say
 waving our hands with bellies full of homemade pizza,
 baked beans, biscuits and hand cranked ice cream
 "Good visit" we'd say, with our Sunday shows watched -
 Ed Sullivan & Disney - Didn't know then
 Ed was a resistor and Disney a Nazi supporter.

In all my 67 years, in all of my travels in all so many other countries
 I have never not looked forward to returning to my country of birth.
 The land is the land.
 A border does not change the land.

When I travelled North to Canada, I was a refugee.
 What is it I return to? Customs.
 Police / not police in body armor. Are they wearing masks?
 I cue up my phone - video ready - I have made decisions.

It is a long train ride and my hips are pained with lack of walking.
 Sleep is heavy with want for breathing.
 Edged air scrapes my sharp cheekbones.
 Eyelids unfold from weighted knowing to slide shut in relief.
 At the border, I cannot close my eyes any more

than I could close them to the body just south of city limits
lying in the snow behind the chain link fence
while I, jangling southbound, passed. Their head East -
feet West, in full sun, in peace, in full winter parka
hood cradled head, fur haloed face
their small satchel tied to the fence.

Something has turned upside down.
Is this my country I've always called home?

See, conversion is just enough change
to make reintegration into moral depravity impossible.
Will the land I call home recognize me? Do I recognize myself?
The land is the land.
Borders don't change the land.
Borders change people.

Christmas Letter Home from Elmira Prison Camp, 1864

Edward A. Dougherty

So cold here, my hands
burn and my feet break.
No wonder those boys fight
as they do. The barracks, finally,

are built. Wooden caves.
Wan December light
stripes the floor, but I'm glad
to be unhoused of the tents,

out of wind, out of sight
of that wretched, stinking river.
I should not complain, love.
Not to you. And not

during this Holy Season. I feel
new meaning in Christ's birth—
as a baby, and in a barn.
So frail, so mean, so cold.

Tell Evie I love her, and tell
yourself, too. Say it twice.
I long to be home.
Please forgive these unmanly

traitorous words, but I wish
this war over. I wish to gather
you and my infant daughter
in my arms again. Love,

and only love. It's the only
measure and mark
anymore. In this,
and in the blood that runs

red no matter the uniform,
no matter the accent—
oh, I've witnessed men boil
with fever in freezing snows

and Yankee boys shivering
unto death under Dixie's sun.
It's all turned around. But
in love and longing for home

we are neither Jew nor Greek,
bond nor free. All are one,
all. This I know, and if—
no, I say it plain: when

when we are together
once more, this will be
my creed and my life,
this one I grant to you.

From Elmira, that hell,
I send all my love. One
fleeting thought of you two
and my heart is redeemed.

There Are Ones

Craig Czury

who stand on myth and the mystic

There are ones who stand on dream

There are ones who stand on the laws that defy the laws of gravity

There are ones who stand on the path of least resistance

The principle that everyone is created from nothing equally

The scent between your legs

There are ones who stand in the light inside the dark behind their eyelids

The ones who stand on nothing with nothing but everything in a naked look

A blank stare

That trance while waiting in line

The ones who stand in silence when pressed for a key

The vital signs of a solution

I know what that is but I don't know how to say it

I'm going there now but

I'm standing on a hunch

A gut feeling

I'm standing on a figment of my imagination

A quirk

A fluke

A whim

My intuition of what it means to be standing in the ether

waiting for a sign to move into anyone's good guess

¼ Inch Deep

Tom Stadnicki

Mama, what will become of this seed?

My child, the sun will shine.

Mama, and what of this seed?

Child, the skies will release the rain.

But Mama, will it grow?

My child, more than you will ever know.

No Kings Again

Joseph R Rowland

The revolution will be politicized, sanitized, and monetized.
Please, regardless of age, race or gender,
step right up, as yourself or in disguise
to witness this epic mind bender.

Join the parade or perhaps a charade
to celebrate our independent two fifty.
Salute the imperfect union we made
and bid farewell to the American century.

Truth is today we are not created equal
and for our rights, we must surely fret.
Incompetent, lying, greedy people
comprise our republic's greatest threat.

We watch the rich get richer at our expense.
Climate change deniers plot dirty deeds
while we wage a war that makes no sense
and immigrants bleed from racist creeds.

But, the past two fifty did have its ups and downs
which must indeed give us hope devout.
So we shall survive these current clowns
and come November, vote them out!

Revolutionary

Andy G. Fagan

Remember and reflect
Entertain ethereal echoes
Vitriol vengeance violence
Opposition over organized oppression
Leveraging loss of luxury and lives
Undoing but ultimately unifying
Toward true tantalizing
Ideals of individual independence
Often oblivious of ourselves
Nascent naive nation
Align and assure again alluring aspirations
Reshape and renew righteousness
Yearn for and yield yourself

The Origin of Our Thirst

Mark Zuss

Before morning,
before the desire for morning,
hidden things surface.

A reservoir of history
reaches its level
with subtle degrees,
sinking as it seeps
between our gnarled, webbed roots.

Unseen feet rush through high grass
in a fatal chase.
The summer fields,
beginnings, loom and beckon.

Poetry bleeds slowly
from the frontier of the unspoken,
a hunted wealth
at the border of our muteness.

It paces through wet spring fields
with the inarticulate grace of young deer.

It steals from old forests,
thrumming with cicadas, inchoate.

Floating from our mouths,
flecked, words hang,
tense as trespassers
aiming their Winchesters.

There is power in the abundant open,
a thought-root, lashing up,
a ground lightning.
It is the desire for freedom,
our urgent well.

It is the American instinct,
a wild desire persists and resists.
It starts our hands and feet.

It comes to surface,
spontaneous as the Appalachian wildflower,
the Ladies Slipper, a wild orchid,
rootless trace under expanses of loam,
a lily of the red depths.

I imagine a language,
a street talk for a liberated America
babbling up,

in pursuit of the named known,
the unnamed, of nameless want.

I listen to night wind songs.
After sundown on my porch
and in the habitation of our dreams
in stone and rented rooms,
the red lily stem
of our tongues
side and ravel
in sudden confluence.

Syllabic and sharp,
thrust in unison,
summoned in full throat,

in shrill and ragged choir
songs of freedom
sung from the origin of our thirst.

What year is this?

S. J. Winter

What year is this?

When the clock runs forward,
 But the country stumbles back.
 Blowing past history's warnings
 like a drunk who never sees the stop sign.

With books vanishing quietly from shelves
 Once loud with a chorus of diversity,
 embracing every possibility.
 When neighbors feel unsure
 If the people beside them hate or love.

When truth feels dangerous, almost illegal,
 kept quiet, passed from hand to hand
 with the fear of retaliation.
 While lies march out in the open
 in polished boots.

Then the past taps our shoulders,
 Leans in close, whispering,
You've seen this before.
 And we bury our heads in the sand.
Not here. Not now. It's not the same.

So tell me — **what year is this?**
 and how many times
 must the world forget
 before it remembers
 the cost of naïveté.

Instructions for Hanging On

Christine Gelineau

(with thanks to Ada Limon whose Instructions on Not Giving Up showed me a way in)

Two hundred fifty years of flawed progress
would be a lot to give up on. Imperfections
persist and persist but in the long length
of time's arc we yearn to confirm the prophet's
faith: it is *an arc that bends towards justice*.

Consider this midwinter's spontaneous
blossoming of neighbor protection in ice-
cold Minnesota; the frogs and unicorns of support
in Portland; the fierce refusal to look away
so many have shown: instead to remember what
brought my grandfather from Northern Ireland
or my in-laws from Nazi Germany, what brought
my father's grandfather south from Montreal
to remake himself and lend his skills to building
Rhode Island's state capitol dome,
to contributing one to another,
one to others.

Out of the mud and the winter detritus daffodils
are spearing their way to the surface, tulips
unfurling their leathery leaves in preparation,
and the forsythia wands blare their multitude
of tiny trumpets. Orioles are returning
to the apple trees, those naturalized
citizens we think of *as American as*.

Spring muscles its way past winter: the tree
leaves un-fist and applaud their green-gold palms,
reminding us: the urgency to bear fruit endures.

American Soil

Terrence P. Dwyer

On the lower East Side, in an area known as Kleindeutschland, part of my family story began in 1847 when my great-grandfather drew his first breath in a tenement flat during a searing summer of typhus and crowded coffin ships arriving at South Street piers filled with escaping Irish citizens who sailed in steerage and landed in quarantine.

The first born in my New York City bloodline, after his father emigrated to avoid Prussian military service and government oppression, he put on a Union army uniform at 15 as a flag bearer for the 102nd Infantry Regiment and left lower Manhattan for Cedar Mountain, Virginia where half the regiment were either killed, wounded, or missing.

Too poor for any other way out of the teeming slums than to carry the colors into battle, he ran across fields, through woods, and up hills at Antietam, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and Missionary Ridge as one of Colonel Van Buren's city boys, then suffered a pass-through hip wound in the Battle Above the Clouds at Kennesaw Mountain.

Returning home at 17, he learned a trade, collected his war pension, joined the Grand Army of the Republic until expelled for not paying his dues, and raised three children, none of whom knew how to speak a word of German, but could recite every line of Whitman's "I Hear America Singing."

Thirty-five years after being wounded, his overworked heart gave out and he collapsed on the shop floor where he worked as a cabinetmaker and lived above as a tenant in a Cherry Street apartment, not far from the East Side flat he left as a boy to go fight for a place to be buried on American soil.

A HUNDRED WILD CENTURIES

Branwen Drew

Epigram:

“You are not fifteen, or twelve, or seventeen –
You are a hundred wild centuries.”

– A House Called Tomorrow– Alberto Rios

We are more than ourselves.
We are our ancestors.
A result of every decision
or choice they made.

They survived wars.
They survived the black plague.
They thrived.
They won the throw
of the genetic dice.

Some were bad,
most were good.
We are the result
of their struggles,
their successes,
their dreams.

Go forward,
while knowing the past,
do not dwell on it.
We build and
continue to build
"a house called tomorrow."

Learn from the past,
write a better future,
leave a history,
a foundation
for our children's children
to build on
out to seven generations
and more.

Remember those
who came before,
make them proud.

earth turns round

Joshua J. Scanlon

head on ground, back to dirt
staring at crimson evening sky
see it bleed to formless blanket
witness end of day come nigh

goodbye warmth and goodbye sunlight
welcome in the chill of night
heart unwound, earth turns round
fade away 'til out of sight

breezes soft upon the air
blowing dust from days of yore
into eyes that won't stop swimming
away from all that came before

goodbye beacon, goodbye lamplight
welcome in the moonless night
heart unwound, earth turns round
too far from shore and out of sight

feel for cracks inside the void
sensing walls are closing fast
grasp at frayed unraveling thread
promising future now distant past

goodbye finite, goodbye all light
goodbye solace in dark of night
heart unwound, earth turns round
out of time and out of sight

Revolution

Catherine Helen Michael

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

- Declaration of Independence

I. Write

Grievances of a People

Abolishing oppression

Towards a more perfect life

II. Let us speak what we must speak

Drafting and following Law

That in Peace we may live

Free

III. We follow fairest Justice

Where Equality yields

Joy

Which we harvest with Hope

IV. Selfish factions forge our

Chains

A demagogue lies to us

And our divided house falls

V. Turn!

Reawaken the spirit

Hear now Liberty's sweet song

She still sings of Freedom

EASTER MORNING

Christina Charuk

On Easter morning all across the country
the peasants are scrambling
eggs thinned out with water to make them go farther.

They tell me we don't have "peasants" anymore
yet there are families all around me
frying hashbrowns in store brand margarine
cheap and easy - topped with ketchup.

If Jesus resurrected this particular Sunday,
he might see my neighbor tinkering with his '85 Chevy
the one he calls "vintage" not old.

His wife wants a silver Chrysler Sebring convertible
and dreams of driving to the coast
top down, hair wrapped in a silk scarf,
while wearing much too much lipstick.

She laughs at the thought
and goes back to her chores.
He pauses and recalls an old Mexican folktale that says
every time the lightning flashes,
God takes our picture.

But rather than a glamour shot,
he sees his brother's kid
who dropped out of school.
The only work he can get
is being shot at - but at least he got healthcare.

They try to make due, but can't understand how
the poor get poorer
and the new Chrysler is even farther away.

Freedom Hour

Laura Mendola Lusk

Freedom, is kindness.

Not perfunctory

But sincere.

Grown from peace in our hearts,

a seed to nurture.

Freedom is seeing what is,

And still showing love.

Despite mistakes,

Mis-steps,

Sad circumstances.

Freedom is a Choice.

Choosing to Create,

Educate,

Liberate.

Choosing to HELP!

Choosing to Serve each other.

Choosing compassion.

Always.

Freedom is knowing it **will** be hard.

But we still show up.

We try.

Freedom is hope, neverending.

Freedom,

is Ours.

My Bride is Despair

Tiffani Ackley-Gammel

No gods nor angels rule
 In the arena of demons and fools
 Archaic automotons, servants of war
 No one will save you
 Now or evermore
 No grief awarded, avert your eye
 Turn your back as your own die

Brazen betrayal,
 The spears are turned towards you
 As you stand proud but few
 Craven decay
 So few stand with sword in hand
 Against the evil we swore we saw through
 Despair my bride I daresay
 This is not even the turn of the tide
 The seeds were sewn long ago to encapture the free
 So I ask the few, where standeth thee?

Artificial remorse adorns the guilty
 Necessity of aggression wilts,
 The illusion glorified
 Your birth was a guarantee of sacrifice
 Your life is used as an excuse for genocide
 No martyr is ever avenged, no one lives again
 Although betrothed to melancholy
 I have been and will always be
 You are simply too pathetic
 To end me
 Brazen betrayal,
 The spears are turned towards you
 As you stand proud but few
 Craven decay
 So few stand with sword in hand
 Against the evil we swore we saw through
 Brazen betrayal, broken ties,
 Isolation by design
 Machiavellian stygian spell
 Shatter the hex and send you to hell
 Despair my bride, no longer my light
 Radicalized by rage I will fight
 I won't go softly into the red night

Be Longing

Jessica Custer-Bindel

It occurred to me yesterday
 When we were talking about our people
 When we were talking about the story
 of the conqueror and the conquered
 Of the colonizer and the colonized

It occurred to me
 That they both live within me

It is as though the stories we don't tell
 End up worn
 Like an emperor's cloak
 Visible only to those
 whose hands have stitched the cloth

The quiet, piecemeal work
 Of unveiling your family's
 Fabric
 Woven
 Torn
 Patched

We do this work in silence
 Offering the thread only
 When innocence is lifted and
 The child is ready

Too much cloth
 And they may
 Never have the courage to sew

It is silent work
 As I grow older
 I understand this need for silence
 I see how
 I
 Also bury my stories deep
 So that my children don't have to carry the burden
 Of my past

May they each
Sow their own burden
Of their own making

Each generation
Has a load to carry
And if they are wise enough - to Unload

I thought of my people
The ones who fled
And the ones who stayed
Those who had the good fortune of an airplane flight
And those who left with just the clothes on their back
On midnight boats to Lampedusa
Those who had scholarships to far away places
And those whose fathers were murdered
Without ceremony or song
Whose bones were never recovered

All of us
Immigrants
All of us
Reaching back to the colonizer
For solace
For protection
Going back to a land
Whose tongue we acquired
But whose taste still felt foreign

Understanding this new place
Was never ours
We surrounded ourselves
With people like us

If we can't have the land
We can find the people
And remember the stories
And admire the cloaks
We carefully tended

In a worn corner
Embroidered, in gold thread
A blessing for our children
"May you never know

The longing
Of leaving
Everything
And everyone
behind”

dead words build the future

an interpretation of the preamble to the united states constitution

philhazen

We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect

oh god america
what have you done

rivulets of innocent blood, babies without mothers or fathers
shrapnel of oil-war and avarice and bombastic death fulfillments

f[make sure you speak the language of propriety]k war
homes and souls destroyed by chestnut fire
lit for salvation of souls that do not exist

behind
eyes of zealotry
eyes of hate
evangelical eyes that shine on sunday morning with the wish to ~~imprison? hold hostage? send to
conversion therapy?~~ lynch the eyes that they dare not make contact with for fear of shame

disdain of oneself becoming fear of others

hemorrhages of greed borne out, the promise of freedom
spilled into the streets and broken hearted
millions living in fear; millions living in hate
most barely living

Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence,

past the precipice of a new millenium full of promise
shattered skies, outlines of smoke, bodies falling
promises of terror, promises full of malice

[you promised me a future where there were no more
wars for oil]

all hope sent abroad never to return
fear becomes u.s.

promote the general Welfare,

schooled for years that one degree would be a good job
 millions of peers and young ones indebted before frontal cortex develops
 four years of experience required for entry
 two degrees preferred
 pay rate will not stand inflation
 there is no other job for you

no homes for the homeless
 no homes for the future
 rent everything

!free cellphone light screen terrorization every night!sign up today!

make sure your neighbor looks the same
 talks the same
 has the same body born into, borne suffering, better
 bigotry more common than love

[the acceptance of hate in mainstream society; the politicization of bodies; the refusal of blame or shame; the wholehearted denial of history; deliberate and directed efforts to un-educate our children; filling our adults with Too Many Worries about the State of the Union; the State of the Union; the State]

and secure

too scared to admit wrong actions
 big actions full of violence directed at the poor
 unfortunate lives over blood boiling out of sand
 -or-
 unfortunate lives blood staining oil drenched sand
 -or-
 unfortunate to live where REVELATIONS MUST OCCUR

[destroy what you cannot own]

the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and

no one has known liberty or justice, no reality where
 empty promises hanging from trees full of strange fruit
 still echo through the halls of our dignitaries and representatives

what does it mean to be free
 when artificial intelligence steals faces
 of children

'to make the world better'

[whose world are we living in?]

our Posterity,

/A whole civilization will die tonight, never to be brought back again/

do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

oh america, oh god

Election Eve

Jane Mulvey

Look up
At the northern sky,
Northern meaning moving,
Magnificent,
Muscular
As it always was.

Walk familiar streets
But in such a way
That you can see everyone
On both sides.
Try to stay close
To buildings
Or copses.
I don't know!

Go out for groceries
Between patients
(But I wouldn't bother
Were it not for my bairn
Who drinks a lot of milk,
Eats the eggs I boil,
Smiles
And enjoys a modest portion
Of ice cream
Some nights
After dinner.)

Look at the lay of the land
Like never before.

Eyes no longer meet.
Today no one even tries
At cheerful small talk.
We stopped a long time ago
Asking each other what we think.

Look out
For anything
Unusual.

Like what?
Don't know.

Could be anything.
Could be nothing.
Trust your gut.

You can freeze milk,
You know.

I Met a Traveler

Susan Thornton

I met a traveler from an antique land who said:
 You guys just don't get it, do you?
 When he stumbled into our village,
 high on heroin, on fear, on his own stupid ideas of
 manhood, I recognized him right away.
 We had met at Ypres. And before that
 at Gettysburg. And before that on the Ohio Border in the
 badly misnamed French and Indian wars.

He saw me. But did he know? I remembered that I was the Jerry
 who got him with hand grenade in the clouds of poison gas on that
 Tuesday in May and I remembered he was the Yank who put
 a bayonet in my throat on the Second day of the Battle for Little
 Round top and then I remembered his cabin on the
 Ohio River and going for him
 with a tomahawk just after my braves with their painted faces
 stormed his wife and daughter and on and on it went
 back and back and back
 for generations yet untold.

And so that night I didn't move as he stepped into the
 fire light where I was drying fish, the hearth
 where my father was teaching my little boy
 to read, the fire light where two nights before the Viet Cong
 had rested from their tunnel digging and enjoyed my cooking.
 I was a woman at that time at home in my village, the able
 bodied men all being away to fight the war of liberation
 against the American invaders.

I saw him and I knew. I had my
 cooking knife and I could have put it in the hollow of his
 throat but then it would have started all again and I just
 wanted off of that wheel and so I just sat there, staring into his eyes.

And the M16 came up and he and his men killed us all. Later they lied
 about it to the press. It was one of the few occasions that got what
 is called Press Attention. He was stoned and we were the "enemy"
 although that night we had no weapons: our only weapon was the food
 we had fed to our neighbors when they asked.
 But the Americans killed us all and later they lied about it.

Sometimes I visit him in his sleep. He lives in Hagerstown Maryland and doesn't remember that the reason he likes to be by the river is that it resembles that part of the Ohio where he once had a homestead and grew potatoes and cabbages and put up his own sauerkraut by the barrel and planted five hundred apple trees. Now he's a baker in an organic restaurant, obsessed by the purity of the ingredients with which he cooks. He's sixty-eight, balding, with a whiskey cough and a bum knee from a rugby injury he got when he returned to the States. He works nights and weekends, shifting his weight to favor his bad leg, standing on the tile floor in his Adidas sneakers, slicing the peaches for pie, pounding and molding the sourdough, pushing himself with burning eyes because he's afraid of the dark, afraid of what he will dream.

In his nightmares he never gets it right. He recalls my face and then wakes himself shouting and sweating before the dream even gets to the part where he activates the incredible killing machine called an M-16. He's afraid of the look on my face.

He still doesn't understand it. Even though he's revisited it often, often, often. It wasn't fear, that look, it wasn't horror. It wasn't even grief for the loss of my village, my father, my son, though we all died that night and I knew we were all going to die. It was acceptance. It was a prayer for peace. It was, dare I say it, love. Love of a kind he has not found since in this his life, search though he can, forage though he may, suffer though he will.

250

K Eiche

To be a Patriot
Is not to be a missile
The laws of the Constitution
Are not up for dismissal

When the rule of law
Is not followed
Our country becomes
Gutted and hollowed.

When the DoD
Becomes the Department of War
Are we really winning?
What's the score?

Lead your life
Be a good example
On others rights
We do not trample

Veterans fought in wars
So we could live freely
Not to profit
Those who live greedily

Some profess
To make America great
And yet their commentary
Is full of vitriol and hate

Live a life of hope and love
Be a compassionist,
It's the opposite of
The ideals of a fascist.

For how you have lived
When you arrive at Heaven's Gate
You shall be judged
And now it's too late.

Going to church
Is no guarantee
It's the golden rule
To gain entry.

And as our democracy
Turns two hundred fifty,
May we not be ruled
By those who are grifty.

May acceptance of those
Who are different than us
Bring us together
And be fair and be just.

A birthday is
A time of reflection
May it also be
Our time of redemption.

Long Live Democracy!

The American Frost Trilogy: A Republic at the Crossroads

K.D. Niles

Robert Frost gave us poems that live like mirrors: deceptively simple on their surface, devastating when we linger. His words have marked the American psyche for a century, etched into graduation speeches and kitchen magnets, but their true weight was never about comfort. Frost wrote of endings, of fleeting ideals, of the burden and myth of choice.

In this moment—when our Republic is tested not by foreign armies but by our own appetite for division, denial, and decay—it felt right to return to Frost. To re-cast his elemental clarity against the backdrop of American politics. These three poems are not parodies. They are refrains. Each one asks us to hear ourselves differently:

- **Nothing Gold Can Stay (American Idealism):** the fragility of our founding dream, once golden, already fading.
- **Fire and Ice (American Refrain):** our partisan destruction, red and blue, each capable of ending us.
- **The Road Not Taken (American Rising):** the choice that remains, still before us, still ours to make.

Together, they are less an homage to Frost than a reckoning through him. If his words still echo, it is because he named the shape of loss and the burden of choice. We stand now at that threshold again.

Nothing Gold Can Stay (American Idealism)

Freedom's first fire was gold,
Too fleeting to take hold.
Its early bloom was bright,
But only for a night.

Each leaf gave way to creed,
Each creed gave way to need.
So dream goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

Fire and Ice (American Refrain)

Some say the Union ends in red,
Some say in blue.
From what I've tasted, rage is fed—
I hold with those who favor red.

But if it had to split in two,
 I think I know enough of blue
 To say that silence—cold as ice—
 destroys,
 and would suffice.

The Road Not Taken (American Rising)

Two roads diverged within this land,
 And sorry we could not walk them both,
 We paused, a people, hand in hand,
 To weigh the paths where we might stand,
 And measure what we owed by oath.

The first was trod by wealth and might,
 Its stones were smooth from ages past.
 It promised ease, a gilded sight,
 A crown for few, a thief of right,
 A glory never meant to last.

The other bent through undergrowth,
 Less certain, rough, yet wide enough.
 It asked for courage, sacrifice,
 For common voice and common price,
 For faith that we are strong enough.

And here we stand.

Frost would have told it so:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
 I took the one less traveled by,
 And that has made all the difference.

The People's Turn

But his choice cannot stand for ours.
 Two roads diverge, as still they do:
 One clings to crowns and guarded towers,
 One sows the seeds of common powers—
 Which path we take is left to you.

The Constitution was always meant to outlast us. It is not fragile parchment but living promise: that liberty is shared, that justice is equal, that power is borrowed and must be returned. When we swear an oath, it is not to a man's ambition or to a party's gain. It is to an idea larger than any of us—that freedom belongs to all of us, or it isn't freedom at all.

In every generation, Americans have had to choose whether to rise to that promise or retreat from it. Frost's voice reminds us: nothing gold can stay unless we tend it, fire and ice will consume if left unchecked, and the road ahead will always divide. But the choosing is still ours.

Perhaps the true measure of patriotism is not how loudly we defend our own power, but how deeply we defend one another's. To remember that "We the People" was never meant as a slogan—it was, and remains, a vow.

Two roads diverge. The question before us is not who leads, but whether we will keep walking together toward the country we once promised ourselves.

To read Robert Frost's original poems in full, visit [Robert Frost on Poetry Foundation](#).

A Seed of Hope

Malinda Miller

A house divided
may not
be able to stand,
but
perhaps a tree
with
strong roots
can survive
many storms.
Even a
trunk
rent

asunder

can continue to
grow,
until branches
separated
meet again
as they reach
upward;
rejoining
and
reblooming
together.

Before the Settlement Changes Hands (Again)

Brian Naylor

"Before the settlement changes hands again,
 Inevitably aged and effortlessly presaged,
 As the fate of the states demands,
 And the state of the fates portends,
 Have you given the vigored consideration
 That the excellent question upon our nation
 Is, "What is deserved of our destined duration?"

With divinity divvied from the Founders' pens
 And infinite evils yet to meet their ends...
 There's a federal case to be won and made
 —beset to shame by the glum, yet embraced by the unafraid—
 That the spear is too willing, and the flag is too weak,
 And the countenanced chilling of the freedoms we seek
 Is imminent, done; Upon us has come,

And our roof-raising gesture's matured to a shrug,
 Well, I'd prefer to unplug
 From that sinister juice
 Ginned up to cinch up a lesser, 'lectrified noose.
 There's a veritable, inheritable aspirative climb
 That restores the poorest hearts to their definitive prime.
 From derivative tumult to decisive sublime,
 There's a call from the cult to democratic divine.

Before the settlement changes hands (again),
 And the devil arraigns us, deranged down to a man,
 There's no exemption from this redemption,
 If you insist to risk your station:
 Avail of Hail Marys for the heathens,
 And Prāyaścitta for the patient.

Until this republic's atonement
 We're but a husk of a homeland
 —Metastatically majestic for Mephistoles' moment—
 Where the wisdom repels
 The pragmatic for parades
 Incensed, insistent or (something) else...
 A razor's edge from rapacious raids.

Before the settlement changes hands (again) —
Make a prayer with yours, or defend your dear friends,
Uncusp this country from the gauntlet again,
And preserve the curious curb to the despot's demands.

Before the settlement changes hands (again),
From selective state to where our bearings' straight,
Extend a hand to your American land,
And serve with all the virtue you can."

Two Severed Sonnets

Brett Alan Dewing

The American
imagination
cannot contain
true genocide.
All of our concepts
of hate and oppression
(forget move-in murder)
revolve around rights.
Our cardinal crimes
kill pride,
attack options,
and are met with
 Loud words and
 Strong emotion.

Those in places with
far longer pasts
must have so little time
for our playground tears.
Those childish shouts
from our unscorched land
can find no purchase
in their scores-scarred dirt.
Dead eyes,
heaped so deep and high,
look on through a thousand wars
in the bones of a body-borne grief
 That can be neither spoken
 Nor truly felt.

Silent Night America

Tish Pearlman

After a child is
Bathed in blood she will
Sleep soundly in America

One bullet can change
Us if it penetrates
Deep enough into the heart

We teach our children
About bullying and yet
Our leaders are bullied
By capitalism, commercialism,
Lobbyists, cash, ego

How many souls must be delivered?
Thousands

How much blood?
Rivers

Liberty and Justice for All

Katherine Micha

Sacagawea guided it

Phillis published it

Betsy sewed it

Elizabeth cured it

With liberty and justice for all

Doretha saved them

Cady organized them

Lucretia reformed them

Lucy petitioned them

Clara nursed them

With liberty and justice for all

Harriet conducted it

Susan amended it

Louisa Mae wrote it

Arabella passed it

With liberty and justice for all

Belva argued it

Jane reformed it

Nellie exposed it

Annie taught it

With liberty and justice for all

Helen inspired

Margaret rebelled

Amelia dared

Viola survived

With liberty and justice for all

Gertrude swam

Eleanor advocated

Frances served

Ella sang

With liberty and justice for all

Georgia painted it

Maya expressed it

Barbara discovered it

Rosa refused it

Ruby braved it

With liberty and justice for all

Katherine solved it

Grace programmed it

Billie Jean beat it

Sally explored it

With liberty and justice for all

Sandra decided it

Ruth pursued it

Sheryl swooped it

Hillary cracked it

Kamala smashed it

With liberty and justice for all

PINNACLE HILL

Kenneth McHenry

I dwell at the foot
 of Pinnacle Hill
 In a quaint domicile
 serene and still
 Under transmission towers
 of red lights shining
 And unseen powers
 defining and designing

'Tis the highest ground
 in the Flower City
 With a panoramic view
 compelling and pretty
 With an expansive great lake
 seven miles to the north
 To the west a botanical park
 of fragrant lilacs bursting forth

Walking Highland Avenue
 descending below
 The tree shrouded slope"

"sweeping down to Monroe
 Coursing my path
 to the rendezvous point
 LORD my heart to prepare
 and my hands to anoint

The Roe's sweetly graze
 on the manicured lawns
 As the Doe's fondly gaze
 at their new speckled Fawn's
 The stars softly shine
 in the pre-dawn morn
 A haunting wind in the trees
 stirs the heart forlorn

Boarding the bus
 that takes me to Gates

To the folly and fuss
 and the toil that awaits
 With the friends and foes
 of my workplace stage
 A theatre of conflict
 on a dramatist's page"

"I enter the scene
 through the door at stage right
 Where I hunger to glean
 words of wisdom and light
 All the worlds a stage
 the bard Shakespeare hath written
 Some play the fool
 take the bait and get bitten

From a mountain exceedingly high
 the King of Kings was shown
 All the kingdoms of this world
 by a cherub disenthroned
 For an altar on Mount Moriah
 and a cross on Mount Calvary
 A ram and a Lamb were provided
 for to set the captives free

From the pinnacle of the temple
 the Lord of Lords was tempted
 By the devil Ha Satan

whose plan was divinely preempted
 Satan's plummet from the summit
 of selfish ambition
 Cast down to the ground as profane
 Consigned to a fate in eternal perdition
 A bane and pain to distain

A pinnacle, an apex
 to attain or to achieve
 To every dream sublime in its time
 Faith to conceive and to believe
 Or a clinical pinnacle
 for cynical souls
 And for arrogant actors
 playing ruinous roles

The world, the flesh
 and the devil imposed
 Corruption on every level
 exposed
 In the flower city madness
 souls lost and alone
 need the lily of the valley
 the sweet rose of sharon

Beneath Pinnacle Hill"
 "the city aches
 the pity fakes
 And the committee takes
 The net of deceitful
 and unjust men
 Making merchandise of the multitudes
 again, again and again

I dwell at the bottom
 of Pinnacle Hill
 In a quaint domicile
 serene and still
 Where Eddie and Ruth
 and Migdalis reside
 Where the Father, the Word
 and the Spirit abide
 Holy Spirit of God
 instill and infill
 Every heart and abode
 beneath Pinnacle Hill...

"Dedicated with love to Ed and Ruth Donohue and Migdalis Perada"

The Revolution Will be... And is... Poeticized

Miles From Nowhere

Monday, dawnish, YMCA Corning, habitual one mile swim, silent milieu, Piscean.
 Ear plugs turgid, latex swim cap snug over top, I glide into and through silence,
 Transcending worlds, via the aqua connection, way back, an American pupa,
 Elementary, standing stoic, hand over heart, Pledge of Allegiance, crystalline verbatim.
 Laps mounting & counting, respirations synchronized, Ahhmerica the Beautiful.
 Assimilated every concept; Lief Erikson, Chris Columbus, Jamestown, Geo. Washington,
 Frederick Douglas, Honest Abe, Dwight Eisenhower...and JFK ,
 My crew of marvel superheroes, dietys to me. in a galaxy, far far away,
 Young lad in metamorphosis, sculpted Patriot, "100 pure cent, Born in the U.S.A.
 In each breath and heartbeat from now on, disciple, soldier, through n' true,
 Word Up!!! I drank the kool aid, so help me God,Amen,Shalom,Namaste', Chou.

Then came maturation, education, chronology,
 It's Thursday, I'm basking in an alleged springtime sun shower,
 Eyes barely closed, with deep rhythmic respirations, sighs, PRN (as needed),
 My democracy currently under siege, hounded by viral autocracy.
 I cringe as the pathogenic netted tapestry is again thrown over me,
 Whispering to God and Buddha, to whomever listens,
 " Danger, Danger, Will Robinson!" Something pseudo, evil, lurks near...
 It seeps insidiously into and over our ideals, drowning us,
 I bob to the surface and gasp, me, and I, marooned, on the Back Nine,
 Perhaps too ancient and yesterday's news to be rescued.
 I lay on the beach head, observant, musing, still life, like broken glass,
 While empathy molts into apathy, untruths root then blossom.
 Greed, arrogance, the "all about me", metastasizes and asphyxiates,
 The diversity and community we once were, and yet,
 I cling like a pit bull to those remaining threads, embracing, refusing to let go,
 For now is the battlefield, concern is the lifeline, and Yes!
 Having lived long enough, I'm acutely aware how high the stakes are...

Even amid this Pandora's Box thrown open, I see that micro flicker,
 Of my children's and grandchildren's eyes, a tiny spark, immolates,
 Hope! That Right is still Might, flairs inherently on this 250th Birthday cake.
 Each candle ablaze with Equality, Sharing, Fairness, Ethical Fiber,
 These ideals are stanchions, to be fought for if it comes to that.....
 One must be willing to throw down, and grapple in their defense,
 Back in the day, I chose, I fought, I won, and I suffered,
 The bashing and bruising, the bloodied lip or nose, the blackened eye.
 Good investments in sustainment of the democratic right thing, Unity!
 At this third quarter century Milestone it can't be more

clear, yeah, really..

The costs and wisdoms of what America is sometimes,

There will always be Good, and sadly, Evil,

How you choose to orbit, is the end product, of your beliefs, choices,

Unattainable of without sacrifice and commitment, Community and empathy,

Each night before rest, in prayers and meditations, I reinforce and remind myself,

O'er and again, I 'm all I chose to be. That we're all a composite , a palette,

That the "joie de vivre" is real and born out of all of us,

In living, loving, being, believing and sharing in our collective America,

And it all its constituent parts n' pieces held sacred, fused in fire,

The Ken Burns, And Ken Chesney's, The Jennifer Hudson's, Martin Luther King's,

Are the true pillars, for which we stand, and shall remain, The U.S.

All of us...

AMERICA

Akua Lezli Hope

Actualize your greater possibilities, America
Manifest better than history's troubled, bent arc
Each era wrestles with its origins, ever shifting weight,
Recasts regrets, engages or denies dirty dancing
Invests in betterments, steps tentatively forward, evolves, or
Conscripts callow, under-optioned youth to serve capitalism's rogue
Agendas, deregulating morality, sundowning, ever devolving

Canaller's Songs

(American Haibun)

William M. House

After walking through the woodland I
arrived at the Chenango's riverbank. I gazed
across the river...across to Route 88. Toward
the place that was once the Chenango Canal
and its towpath.

I wondered if I concentrated...if I tried hard
enough... that in my mind's ear, I would no
longer hear the traffic's noise.

If I tried hard enough that I would hear the
sound of the work animals. The neighing...the
whinnying of the horses. The braying of the
mules.

If I tried hard enough that I would hear the
canaller's songs.

Faded memories,
Remembering not...long gone.
Canal's obituary.

Willow

Avi Reed

What a beautiful expression of the earth I am,
its rocks and minerals
gathered to make my bones,
the earth remade
so that it might look back
and witness itself.

I am the earth coming up for breath,
looking out at this strange world
for such a short while
before gravity pulls me home.

How miraculous it is to exist.

I am the egg laid beneath a brooding hen.
I am the nasturtium blooming from the earth.
I am the snowmelt pouring from my tap.

The cancer inside me
is made of all these things too.

It grows, and the earth gathers up her own
It grows, and the earth's song grows louder.

Soon
the earth will welcome me home.

Wrap this body in soft cotton.

I am become the earth.

Plant me over there beneath the willow,
and I will become the willow.

You will feel me
tickling your cheek
with my branches.

Back to School (spoken word on the Bill of Rights)

Kenneth Shea

Maybe back in school you think you covered this ground
 But for some this is new so I'm breakin' it down
 There's been some confusion as of late
 So let's all just get a few things straight
 It's pretty basic but cats are somehow forgettin'
 So everybody listen up class is now in session

After we won the war for independence
 There were a couple of things that just didn't make sense
 We were thirteen states
 Not everything was great
 But each individual one was defenseless

Now this was a problem that needed solutions
 Like a new federal government and new constitution
 So our Framers gathered and they toiled long hours
 To create a document that would restrict the powers
 Of this newly formed constitutional republic
 By and for the people, a revolution in government

When they were done they presented it to the states
 And the states were like, "um... this is good, but wait...
 You know how we been talkin' bout the Natural Rights o Man?
 Well... how come that aint part of the plan?
 We need to protect the truths for which we were fighting
 So if it's all the same to you we'll take it in writing"
 So our Framers went back and put those rights into diction
 Now... let's go over these supplemental restrictions

All speech is protected especially political
 From those elected right down to criminals
 We can all get together and write our complaints down
 And plaster it all over, town after town
 There aint gonna be no Government church
 And I'm just gettin' started, that's just the First

Now some folks must have a gutful of gumption
 Debatin' the Second like it was up for discussion
 Twistin' the words and the original intent
 When they damn sure know what they meant

People have a basic right to defense
 You can't erase it just by changing the tense

Chorus:

I'll say my piece and talk with who I want
 Protect my place with double aught buckshot
 You can keep yer soldiers outa my home
 And if you ain't got warrant you aint touchin my phone

There's a process to follow
 If you want to amend it
 But your intentions seem hollow
 When you just pretend that
 It don't exist or it don't matter
 I'm a cut straight through that kinda chatter

If you still want to change it here's what it takes
 Two thirds of congress and three fourths of the states
 And if you wanna go after that original bill
 You're gonna have a real tough climb up Capitol Hill

Chorus

You see the Natural Rights of Man are divine
 A concept that transcends space and time
 Now that sounds cheesy but it's an important distinction
 And sometimes freedom requires some thinkin'
 See, if your rights are given by men
 Then they can be taken away again
 That's why we hold these truths to be self evident
 We are not meant to be ruled by a president

Oh, but they act like they rule us
 Hide facts to confuse us
 This is exactly like what they said they would do to us
 If we let the executive office get out of control
 Now it's pickin up speed on a downward roll

Chorus

Now lemme sum up the rest of the mission
 We The People have a right to petition
 Without being accused of sedition
 And with no judge's decision
 Just be thrown in a prison
 And just so that there be no doubt
 The States decide what we left out

Chorus

So quickly now everyone let's review

A few things the state can't tell you to do
What you can say
How you can pray
With whom you can play
They can't
Limit your means to protection
Occupy homes over objections
Or carry out random inspections
Just remember that last list
I think we're done here
Class dismissed

The Receipts

Brian Hugenbruch

America is not a country that keeps
its receipts, crumpled and faded ink
sideways in its battered trifold wallet.
The wake of history never quite stains
the hem of the good lady's bronze robes
which is good -- because democracy
is dry-clean only.

As sunset spills like spaghetti sauce
onto empty sidewalks,
with keys and bombs hanging
somewhere askew of their proper places,
America checks its wallet
and to its surprise finds change waiting.
If we had any memory of history
it wouldn't be so remarkable:
our receipts would paint a drunken
disorderly story of bad decisions
and stumbles toward the more perfect
in a hazy pass at correcting the flight paths
of those angels we like to our natures.

But we forget, and we wake to find
ourselves we know not where,
with a rising sun of good intent
warming our backs, and change
is in our wallet, waiting for its day.
And it will come. Remembering our sins
or not, the change always comes, all the same.

The Carousel Compact

Irena Raia

*A free country is a carousel, and to ride it isn't free
To saddle up, you need a ticket, for which there is a fee
Whatever the cost, you'll pay it, but not for glory, or for greed,
Getting on that horse is your salvation; it's not a want, it is a need*

*While you ponder such a purchase, you keep a riddle in your mind
In a place where liberty is promised, you ask,
"Why must I pay a fine?"*

*But instinctively, you understand, somehow,
Your bones screaming, "Yes, it must be true!"
You hear whispers in the wind, softly calling
"We are a nation of the many, not the few!"*

*Your secret question asked in silence,
The answer yearned for all the same
So heed the words hereafter written
They tell us why we play this game*

There can be no LIBERTY without JUSTICE
There can be no JUSTICE without DUE PROCESS
There can be no DUE PROCESS without ACCOUNTABILITY
There can be no ACCOUNTABILITY without CONSEQUENCES
There can be no CONSEQUENCES without CONVICTIONS
There can be no CONVICTIONS without COURAGE
There can be no COURAGE without COMMUNITY

There is no COMMUNITY without COMPROMISE
There is no COMPROMISE without COMPASSION
There is no COMPASSION without COMMUNICATION
There is no COMMUNICATION without CONNECTION
There can be no CONNECTION without EACH OTHER

*If the cost of liberty is connection, then its currency is choice
We pay it when we choose more than ourselves, when we value every voice
So the answer to the riddle is that freedom was never free
And the only future we have left to find is built together, don't you see?*

*We must work to save our carousel
All of us, here and now, both you and me
This expenditure is worthy, because
together*

THERE CAN BE

The Revolution Will Be Poeticized

F.V. Grunfeld

As the earth makes its way round the sun as it burns
The revolution has been poeticized

As the moon encircles the earth as it whirls
The revolution has been poeticized

As the cycle of life is complete and renewed
The revolution has been poeticized

As the wheels of power were unpowered with swords
The revolution has been poeticized

As the mechanisms of movement have sung as they turned
The revolution has been poeticized

When the events of this cycle have all come unspooled
The revolution will be poeticized

When the mechanisms of movement all sing as they turn
The revolution will be poeticized

When the wheels of power are unpowered by words
The revolution will be poeticized

and

When the earth makes its way round the sun and it burns
The revolution will be poeticized.

How to Explain Communism to Children

Bon Fed

He traveled his whole long life
crawling low to the ground.
He was told by his leaders
not to make a single sound.
He was kept quiet and ordered
to say what he was told.
And by the time he reached 6th grade,
he looked very old.

He was not free to come and go
as he pleased
and the shackles on his ankles
would never be eased.
He lived under the pine trees
and never saw the sky,
because under communism
dreams are born just to die.

Well one day he came to a
clearing in the green
and for the first time in his life,
he saw something never seen.
Above all the tress and darkness
below a beautiful sky overhead
he looked up and watched clouds
go by and then he said,
“I would like to live here
in the clearing ‘till dead!”

Well the soldier began to live
life anew.
He would crawl ‘till he came upon
the big clearing he knew
was somewhere outside the
darkness of the trees
and held for the promise
of life’s liberties.

But he toiled and crawled for
many years to come

under the trees crawling still
with his gun.
And his dream of this clearing
would never come he felt.
So, in a rare display of longing
to see sky he knelt.
He asked God up in heaven
To end his war tracks.
And God said to him simply,
“Trade your gun in for an axe!”

a little something

Kimberli Schull

America dear, come here.

You've got a little something on your soul.

It looks like contempt for people with an accent? Or is it that a bit of "I'm better than those people"? Tsk, tsk, you'll make yourself sick if you consume that stuff!

Here, let me get that for you before the stain sets.

You look much better without it.

Rules Rules

Janine Federowicz

Rules Rules, Teacher Teacher.

Take your hat off.

Go to class

Learn how to be

A cog in a wheel

Regurgitate facts that never last

In your mind, soon there'll be

A realization.

Of the signs of the times.

Famine, poverty, breakdown of families

Corruption everywhere starting from up there

At the top of the pyramid, in the Vatican too.

The false 'propheteering' of those who say they care...

About me and you

Meanwhile mergers become more evident.

A college education's value no longer seems evi-

Dently there appears to be a need

For us to make up our own rules

That nourish the heart and stimulate the mind

Can't escape in drugs and wine every time

There appears to be a need

For us to make up our own rules

So we'll, in fact, stop living for fools.

Who are, I fear, far from their hearts.

Gotta love them as we show them

Mercy from the start,

Gotta love them as we show them

Happiness comes from the heart

Every struggle that happens to come our way.

Remember others struggled longer

So for courage,

Pray.

That you'll endure.
That truth will win out.
That God, His Son, and love
Is what it's all about

Sharing our knowledge and our wisdom, too

'Love thy neighbor as thyself'.
Is the most important tool
For me and for you.

In Defence of the Immigrants

Ron Vetrino

In defence of the immigrants
Because that's all we are
Coming to hither
From places afar
Over the land
And over the sea
I look at you
And I see me
To travel afar
In pursuit of a dream
Puts us on the same page
Puts us on the same team
To live out that dream
Is something else entire
Is truly a struggle
A trial by fire
The flames of that fire
Are what melts the pot
In some ways each other
Are all that we've got
We all deserve justice
We all should know peace
Regardless what may be
Our selves or beliefs
In this house divided
So we make our home
Some day may we share in
The freedom to roam
And clear the way forward
For those who would follow
Our blood, sweat, and tears

Are what makes this land hallowed

A beacon of hope

To offer relief

From what may be causing

Your closely held grief

Original title

Original sin

First nations fell

From without, not within

May we honor their ghosts

May we honor their lives

May we honor all stolen

Away from their tribes

May we build up a bulwark

Against rampant greed

May we build something better

Than we have received

Forty Five

Dee Kirkem

What will you do
When all of it's on fire
When there isn't control left to be had
There's no more stocks
No more bonds
No more assets or buildings
No wall. No street.

When the smoke clears
And you're left standing there
In pools of their blood

What will you do
When there is no one left to perform for
And no one left to impress
When it's you and your thoughts.
Thoughts that come like an eventual rain

How lonely is it?

If you tell your God you thought what you did was right
Are you washed of the blood that you shed that night

When the time has come
And you gasp for your last breath
Will you pray?
Will you let your arrogance beg for forgiveness

What will you do

Because that time is coming soon.

TEN SCORE AND FIFTY YEARS AGO

Laura Schermerhorn

Ten score and fifty years ago
A new nation had been born
Conceived in the old world
In the hearts of the foreign born

Intrepid souls with hopes and dreams
Boarded rugged wooden ships
Waved goodbye to loved ones on the shore
And set sail on a one way trip

Atlantic waters cold and rough
To cross it many days
One by one came the ships
Soon they came in waves

They sailed from Great Britain
Holland, France and Spain
They came from many places
Sadly some had came in chains

The new world wasnt new
There were natives on the land
The two found common ground
And trading soon began

Thirteen colonies were formed
Britain ruled over the much
But New York and the middle colonies
We're first claimed by the Dutch

Unfair taxes by Great Britain
Levied on every colony
It brought acts of rebellion
Into Boston Harbor went the tea

With war in the air
It Separated Colonists
Loyal to the crown were Tories
Seeking Independence - Patriots

It began in 1775
With a shot heard round the world
The British surrender at Saratoga
The American flag started to unfurl

The war ended in 1781
The Continental Army at Yorktown
Defeated the British Army
It was a huge loss for the crown

With the victory over Britain
America's heart began to beat
Expanding West to California
It's history bittersweet

Happy birthday, America
To all 50 United States
All of us are on a path
The future of America awaits

New York's Liberty Bell

out of the ashes to face the future

Rick van Valkenburg

In 1729, a bell was cast in Amsterdam
Dutch citizens collected coins to
christened the molten bronze
with smelted silver.

It was shipped to New York City in 1731
To be housed in the Middle Dutch Reformed Church,
The Dutch congregation dates back to 1628.

In 1735, it was rung to announce the acquittal of John Peter Zenger
Charged with libel for publishing articles critical of the Colonial Governor,
His attorneys argued successfully that TRUTH is a DEFENSIVE against
Charges of LIBEL, seen as a potent milestone
for Freedom of the Press in America.

Forty years later, on July 9, 1776, it rang
to announce to New York City
The signing of the Declaration of Independence.
Witnessed by George Washington and his Continental Army.
As the British warships threatened in New York Harbor

The bell was whisked
out of New York
for safekeeping.
The occupying British forces
converted the church
into a stable for workhorses.

Returned to the church after the War,
It rang to commemorate the Inauguration
of George Washington as President of the United States
And his funeral ten years later.

The start of a tradition for every
Ring in the President's Inauguration
and tolling for every President's Funeral
in the history of the Republic.

Until now.

The bell was moved to the Middle Collegiate Church, on Second Avenue and East 7th Street in 1949.

Tolling for events, including remembrance services for September 11th

It rang for the election of Joseph Biden in 2020, and weeks later

In the early hours of December 5, 2020, a fire broke out in the vacant building on the corner and quickly spread to the sanctuary next door, raging to six alarms. Stained glass windows burst, The roof collapsed, but the steeple remained standing.

Miraculously, the bell was intact.

Crews brought it down from its precarious perch, and the Church Pastor, Rev. Dr Jacqui Lewis rang the bell nineteen times to celebrate Juneteenth and to mark the solemn anniversary

moved to a temporary exhibit at the New York Historical Society, before being returned to the Church.

It sits now in silence and waits.

The Sanctuary and spire have yet to be rebuilt.

“The bell’s echoes are a reminder of the yawning gulf that remains between our nation’s foundational promises and the systemic racism that still separates us from them,” notes the Middle Church’s website.”

Maimu's Long Trek to Freedom

Katherine O'Donnell

Girl saw the devil's eyes
She breathed blue, black and white.
Her flag down, other rise
Stalin, she had to fight.

One in womb, boy in tow
mother now had to flee
A homeland much below'd
With grandma, they were three.

Caught a ship, last to go
Before the curtain fell.
Saw harbor set aflame
Tallinn burned, bombed to hell.

Ship afloat, Baltic black
Sister hard hit and sank.
Russians bombed once again
Theirs listed in the drink.

Next trek o'er war torn land
Train, cart, foot misery
On she tread, shredded shoes
To find them room to sleep.

Weary feet, made their way
Through bombs and broken glass.
Strangers joined, huddled mass
In mountain spot at last.

Camp was home, people fled
from countries overrun.
Penniless, cold, hungry
Many folk crowd one room.

Women did what they could.
Cook soup and bread from air.
Search wintry scape for wood
No boots or clothes to spare.

The boy he got rickets.
The women thin as rails.
When baby came along
She had cause to wail, but

Silence was the order
Risk attack when so near.
Bombers perching closeby
Buzzing planes raining fear.

Five years in three sad camps
Displaced, then came the spark,
A glint of hope appeared
A friend was in New York.

Mother trained in English
Business acumen
Set to applications
And help through the UN.

Passage she did garner
Despite state policy
Two widows, two children
Viewed as much too risky.

Mother chose the US
5000 miles more to flee
A chance for children's future
A promise to be free.

Yet another voyage
Across the open sea
Grandma practiced English
'Tween bouts of vomiting.

Sponsored by another
They still had far to go
Landed at train station
In southern Ohio.

Queen City soon became
work, church and family.
Mother loved the US
Smokies to shining sea.

Citizen, a proud Mom,
Cites Abe with reverie,
Of, by, for the people
My home of liberty.

She crossed the seas
In search of peace
For family
Land of the free.

Revolution

Melissa Blake

Imagine the world today if no shots had been fired
No bodies were buried, no mothers had mourned their sons
The truth was self-evident so the enslaved had been freed
All people were equal, all treaties were treated as sacred
Together the multitudes, Black and white and brown
Women and men, Indigenous and not
Marched, disrupted, chanted, sang, and wrote
For freedom