

Welcome!

This guide is designed for organizations that are conducting community conversations. This guide provides questions and texts for the following themes, but organizations are welcome and encouraged to develop conversations that fit the needs of their community's interests.

Themes for *Open for Discussion: 250th Edition* include:

- A More Perfect Union
- We the People
- American Experiment
- Doing History
- Power of Place
- National Holidays and Celebrations
- Breaking Bread

Open For Discussion supports Idaho communities in creating opportunities for shared discussion, engagement, and connection about topics that matter to them.

IHC has provided 2-3 humanities related texts per topic, under TEXTS (Beginning on Page 21). Texts include historical documents, photos, poems, short stories, and essays. Texts help center the conversation on a topic, invite multiple perspectives, and opens discussion. Texts are available for host organizations to select for their conversation. Host organizations are welcome to mix and match objects from different topics and are not required to use the objects provided by IHC.

IHC has also provided a sample outline and sample questions for each conversation topic and activity. Each conversation is designed to last approximately 60-90 minutes, but you can adjust the conversation based on your needs. You can use the questions provided by IHC and/or create your own to achieve your goals for the conversation.

Why Host an Open for Discussion Program

For fifty years, the IHC's mission has been to provide opportunities to deepen public understanding of human experience by connecting people with ideas. The vision of the IHC is that the humanities inspire a more literate, tolerant, and intellectually inquisitive Idaho citizenry, better able to embrace life's possibilities.

Open for Discussion helps IHC fulfill our mission and vision by providing opportunities for individuals from all communities to explore ideas together and engage in respectful conversations. Listening to other perspectives through Open for Discussion Community Conversations can help deepen our understanding of what it means to be human.

IHC Guiding Principles include:

- We believe that the humanities should be open, accessible, and welcoming to all Idahoans
- We believe that every story contributed to a deeper understanding of being human
- We believe that respectful communication provides opportunities to learn new perspectives
- We believe that curiosity about the variety of expressions of the human spirit teaches us the value of our differences.

Community conversations centered on the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence provide opportunities for Idahoans to reflect and share their perspectives about this anniversary. Continuing to discuss the ideas represented in the Declaration of Independence and United States Constitution are an important part of honoring the generations who have sacrificed to preserve these values.

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Getting Started

The hardest part of ***Open for Discussion: 250th Edition*** is getting started and being clear about the goals of your conversation. As you consider the different topics, themes, and objectives, remember that you will be hosting these conversations with members of your community from different backgrounds. We suggest you start with a question that connects to the themes and feels especially relevant to your community's history.

The planning guide below can support you in this process:

Reflect

- What is your own reaction to hearing the term, “**A More Perfect Union?**” How might this be relevant to your community or organization?
- What topics within this theme do you think people in your community will be most interested in discussing?
- What topics might be unfamiliar or challenging to discuss with your community?
- Are there opportunities to intersect or amplify programming you’re already doing with this theme?
- What challenges do you foresee with hosting a conversation?
- What does success look like for your organization as you bring people together in conversation?

Identify

Guiding Question – compose a guiding question that synthesizes your above reflections and feels measurable. What do you hope that participants will be able to explore in conversation?

Potential Partners- What other organizations may help you explore your guiding questions? Who will facilitate the conversation?

Metrics for Success – How will you measure progress towards your goals? How do these align with your organization’s mission and goals?

Event Planning Checklist

Below is a to-do list to use as you prepare for each community conversation.

Before

- Set tentative dates and times for your community conversations.
- Decide where you will host the community conversation. We recommend neutral spaces where groups can spread out: public libraries, parks, community centers, art galleries, and even coffee shops can serve as a venue depending on the number of participants.
- Ensure you have facilitators for participants. We recommend no more than 25 participants per facilitator.
- Review the activity guide, adapting it to fit your context or focus.
- Promote your upcoming event. Social media, community calendars, and the IHC are all great ways to spread the word.
- Print and/or prepare any necessary materials.

During

- Use your plan but adjust as needed to meet your group's needs.
- Administer and collect participant feedback surveys.
- Depending on the group's comfort and consent, take photos to highlight your event.

After

- Reflect on your outcomes and review the plan for your next event to make any necessary changes or adjustments.

Facilitating Conversations

1. Focus on engaging the participants in the discussion. Facilitators do not serve as lecturers and should refrain from providing their perspectives.
2. Limit the conversations to 25 people per facilitator to allow everyone a chance to speak multiple times during the conversation.
3. Arrange the chairs in a circle so everyone can participate and engage.
4. Use people's names and encourage participants to do the same to personalize the conversation.
5. Set a relaxed and open tone. Most people feel relaxed when they know what to expect, so prepare participants. It's important to also acknowledge that you understand people participate in a variety of ways; some people are more shy, they are active listeners or feel less comfortable speaking in a group.
6. Get people talking by asking an opening question. Ask questions that encourage multiple perspectives and viewpoints.
7. Structure the conversation in different ways to encourage participants to talk. Do activities in pairs or small groups throughout the conversation to create a sense of connection and openness.
8. Select 2-4 objects to ground the conversation. These include photos, historical documents, short texts, essays, articles, speeches, and other media to anchor the conversation. Texts should be accessible in their format and invite multiple interpretations from participants. IHC recommends using only 2-3 objects per conversation but having a couple of additional on-hand based on your goals. Objects focus the conversation on a topic with multiple perspectives and can help redirect or liven the discussion if needed.
9. Encourage participants to ask each other questions, not just the facilitator.
10. Anticipate challenges and find ways to address them through dialogue. For example:
 - a. Ask for clarification, "Can we dig into this a little bit more?"
 - b. Ask for input from the group, "Can someone help me understand what _____ is saying?" or "Does someone want to add any thoughts?" or "Does anyone have a different perspective?"
 - c. Call out the tension, "I noticed that after you said _____ it got quiet."

Asking Questions

1. Ask open-ended questions that will spark discussion. Refrain from asking yes or no questions.
2. When introducing an object, scaffold your questions to ensure that attendees gain a mutual understanding of the object's content. This method also helps attendees become more comfortable with talking about the text before diving into deep conversation. See below for examples:

Clarifying:

- a. What's happening in this object?
- b. What do you notice?
- c. What do you see?
- d. What stands out to you?

Implication:

- a. What do you think the author meant?
- b. What is the author trying to say?
- c. What is the meaning of this object?
- d. What is this object saying about this topic?

Significance:

- a. What does this object mean to you?
- b. What does this object say about your community?
- c. What is this object's significance to current events, your family, your community, etc?
- d. Follow up with questions that get into deeper meaning and conversation about how people connect with the theme, topic, and/or object. See examples:
 - Tell me more about...?
 - What do you mean when you say...?
 - What does everyone else think about ...?
 - Did anything about their response surprise you?
 - It sounds to me like you value.... Can you tell me more about that?
 - Does anyone have a different perspective or a different take on this?

We the People

1. Begin by introducing yourself and your organization. Prepare attendees by explaining how you will facilitate the conversation. For example, *“Today we are going to be talking about the topic of We the People. We will look at a couple of different texts and photos to help guide our conversation. I encourage you to listen to each other with respect and share your opinions and thoughts openly with the group.”*
2. **Introductions- 5 minutes**
 - a. Pass out the image of *Mrs. Yoshiye Abe Making Flags*. Ask participants to say one word or phrase that comes to mind when they see the image.
3. **Whole Group- 15 minutes:**
 - a. Ask participants:
 - i. Were you surprised by anyone's responses?
 - ii. Would anyone like to explain their response?
 - iii. What's happening in this image?
 - iv. What message do you take from this image?
4. **Small Groups – 15 minutes**
 - a. Have participants break into small groups of 2-3
 - b. Ask participants to discuss:
 - i. Why do you think the photographer took this photo?
 - ii. What do you think this photo represents?
5. **Whole Group – 15 minutes**
 - a. Pass out image of *The First Vote*.
 - b. Ask participants:
 - i. What is the message behind this image?
 - ii. What are the rights of the people?
 - iii. What are the people's responsibilities to their community?
 - iv. How is voting a right? How is it a responsibility?
6. **Small Groups- 15 minutes**
 - a. Pass out the *Photograph of the Veterans for Peace at the March*.
 - b. Ask Participants:
 - i. What is going on in this image?
 - ii. How does this connect to the phrase, “We the People?”
 - iii. How do people make their voices heard in your community?
 - iv. How should people make their voices heard?
7. **\Wrap Up- Whole Group – 5 minutes**
 - a. Have participants go around and say one word or phrase that comes to mind when considering “We The People.”
 - b. Thank participants for attending and encourage them to keep talking!

We the People**Additional Questions**

1. How do we define who “the people” are?
2. Who defines who “the people” are?
3. How do “the people” participate in society?
4. Can you talk about a time when you felt that you did not belong with a group?
5. Is there a time where it was important to organize behind a cause?
6. How do people organize behind ideas?
7. What can people do together that they cannot do alone?
8. How does belonging create a sense of community?
9. What are some benefits of community or group of people?
10. What are some benefits and consequences when people participate in their government?
11. How do people govern themselves in your community?
12. Can you talk about a time when you’ve participated in government?
14. When do you feel the most inspired to participate in your local government?

A More Perfect Union

1. Begin by introducing yourself and your organization. Prepare attendees by explaining how you will facilitate the conversation. For example, *“Today we are going to be talking about what “A More Perfect Union” means to us in our communities. We will look at a couple of different texts and photos to help guide our conversation. I encourage you to listen to each other with respect and share your opinions and thoughts openly with the group.”*
2. **Introductions – 10 minutes**
 - a. Introduce yourself
 - b. Pass out, *The Awakening* and have participants say one word or phrase that comes to mind when they see the image.
 - c. Ask Participants:
 - i. Did anyone’s response surprise you or stand out to you?
 - ii. Does anyone want to discuss their response?
3. **Large Group – 20 Minutes:** Discuss the image
 - a. Ask Participants:
 - i. What do you think this image is about?
 - ii. What stands out to you the most in this image?
 - iii. How does this image demonstrate becoming “a more perfect union?”
 - iv. What does “a more perfect union” mean to you?
 - v. What does it look like?
4. **Small Groups- 15 Minutes:**
 - a. Break Participants into groups of 2-3. Pass out *To Be Twenty Again* by Chude Pam Allen.
 - b. Have participants take turns reading the poem and discussing:
 - i. What is this poem saying?
 - ii. How does this poem make you feel about the past?
 - iii. What about the future?
5. **Whole Group – 15 Minutes**
 - a. Bring the whole group back together to discuss the poem further
 - i. What hopes and aspirations did you have when you were young?
 - ii. How have your goals changed over time?
 - iii. What ideas did you want for your community when you were young? How has that changed?
6. **Whole Group – 15 Minutes**
 - a. Pass out *America* by Claude McKay or *Ghazal: America the Beautiful* by Alicia Ostriker.
 - b. Have participants take turns reading the poem and discuss:
 - i. What stands out to you in this poem?
 - ii. How does pride create a desire for change for the better?

- iii. How can we honor and recognize our past while looking to the future?
- 7. **Wrap-Up - 5 Minutes:** Have participants go around and say one word or phrase that comes to mind when they consider the phrase, "A More Perfect Union."
 - a. Thank participants for coming
 - b. Encourage them to fill out the feedback form and keep talking!

A More Perfect Union**Additional Questions**

1. What makes your community a great place to live already?
2. How do you feel about seeing change in your community?
3. What do you need to make your community a better place to live?
4. What about your community do you already enjoy?
5. How does it feel to fall short of a goal?
6. How does it feel to reach a goal through an unexpected way?
7. How do you wish your community could be “a more perfect union?”
8. What do you think it would take for the U.S. to be “a more perfect union?”
9. What do you think a “more perfect union” looks like?
10. What is the role of leaders in helping to create a better place?
11. How can change lead to growth?
12. Why do you think that people tend to look for change when things are not going well?
13. How does compromise play a role in creating “a more perfect union?”
14. What law would you change for the betterment of your community?
15. How can communities come together despite their differences?

American Experiment

1. Begin by introducing yourself and your organization. Prepare attendees by explaining how you will facilitate the conversation. For example, “*Today we are going to be talking about what “The American Experiment” means to us as a community. We will look at a couple of different poems and photos to help guide our conversation. I encourage you to listen to each other with respect and share your opinions and thoughts openly with the group.*”
2. **Introductions – 5 Minutes**
 - a. Introduce yourself to participants and pass out the *US Senate Seats* Image
 - b. Have participants introduce themselves and say one word or phrase that comes to mind when they see the image.
3. **Whole Group – 15 minutes**
 - a. Ask Participants:
 - i. What’s happening in this image?
 - ii. How does this image connect to politics today?
 - iii. How does lobbying and private interest play a role in what we consider to be “the American Experiment?”
4. **Small Groups – 15 minutes**
 - a. Break participants into groups of 2-3 and pass out *Open Memo to the Congressional Appropriations Committee and the Military Department of Defense* by Sandra Maria Esteves
 - b. Have participants take turns reading the poem and discuss:
 - i. What is the message of this poem?
 - ii. What is this poem saying about the “American Experiment?”
5. **Large Group – 15 Minutes**
 - a. Bring participants back together to discuss the poem
 - i. What is our role in the “American Experiment?”
 - ii. How does our role in the “American Experiment” differ from this role of elected officials?
 - iii. What does this poem say about the duty of elected officials?
6. **Large Group – 20 Minutes**
 - a. Pass out *The Hyphenated American*. Ask participants:
 - i. What is the artist’s message with this image?
 - ii. How is voting related to “the American experiment?”
 - iii. How are ideas about who is an American related to democratic values?
 - iv. What is the “American Experiment?”
7. **Wrap-up – 5 minutes**
 - a. Have everyone go around once more and say one word or phrase that comes to mind when they consider “The American Experiment.”
 - b. Thank everyone for coming and encourage them to keep talking!

American Experiment**Additional Questions**

1. How did your community come to be?
2. Who are the key leaders in your community?
3. Can you talk about a time when working with each other was important for your community?
4. Have there been times where people have engaged in your community?
5. How can you get more people to participate in American democracy?
6. What role does personal liberty play in American democracy?
7. How important are your rights when making difficult choices for your family and community?
8. How can we inform ourselves about participating in government?
9. How do people participate in government in your community?
10. What causes draw people out to participate in your community?
11. Who has experienced the promises established in the Declaration of Independence?

Power of Place

1. Begin by introducing yourself and your organization. Prepare attendees by explaining how you will facilitate the conversation. For example, “*Today we are going to be talking about what the term, “Power of Place” means to us in our community. We will look at a couple of different poems and photos to help guide our conversation. I encourage you to listen to each other with respect and share your opinions and thoughts openly with the group.*”
2. **Introductions – 10 Minutes**
 - a. Introduce yourself to participants.
 - b. Have participants go around and introduce themselves by stating their name and their favorite place.
 - c. Ask participants:
 - i. Did anyone’s response surprise you?
 - ii. Would anyone like to explain why they chose their place?
 - iii. What about a place makes it your favorite or special to you?
3. **Small Groups- 15 minutes**
 - a. Pass out *Old South Meeting House* by January Gill O’Neil. Have participants break into groups of 2-3 and take turns reading the poem.
 - b. Have participants discuss the poem:
 - i. What is this poem about?
 - ii. How does this poem make you feel about place?
 - iii. What role do people play in making a place special?
4. **Whole Group- 15 Minutes**
 - a. Bring the group back together to discuss:
 - i. How does history make places special?
 - ii. Does anyone have a story about a place they connect with?
 - iii. How do we connect with places that are important to our national history, even if they’re far away?
 - iv. What local places can we use to connect ourselves with our history?
5. **Whole Group – 15 Minutes**
 - a. Pass out the image of *Lincoln Figure under Construction*.
 - i. Ask participants: What is this an image of?
 - ii. What do you think about this image?
 - iii. Why did the photographer take this photo?
 - iv. How has Mount Rushmore’s purpose changed over time?
 - v. How have our ideas about important places changed over time?
 - vi. How do you know a place is special or important?
6. **Wrap-Up – 5 Minutes**
 - a. Have participants go around and name a word or phrase that comes to mind when they consider the term, “Power of Place.”
 - b. Thank participants for attending and encourage them to keep talking!

Power of Place**Additional Questions**

1. What places hold special memories for you?
2. What places have you seen change during your life?
3. How do places tell a story?
4. What stories does your community tell?
5. What does “the power of place,” mean to you?
6. When have you experienced a powerful place?
7. How do we connect with place differently than we connect with each other?
8. What is the balance between preserving places and supporting growth?
9. What is the role of nature in creating places?
10. How do people create places?
11. Why do you think some places are more important than others?
12. What places are most important to your community? To your state?
13. What places are most important to Americans?
14. What places are important to you that do not matter as much to others?
15. How can you help preserve places that matter to you?

Doing History

1. Begin by introducing yourself and your organization. Prepare attendees by explaining how you will facilitate the conversation. For example, “*Today we are going to be talking about what “Doing History” means to us in our community. We will look at a couple of different poems and photos to help guide our conversation. I encourage you to listen to each other with respect and share your opinions and thoughts openly with the group.*”
2. **Introductions – 10 Minutes**
 - a. Introduce yourself and pass out the *Little Red School House* image.
 - b. Have participants introduce themselves by stating their name and one word or phrase that comes to mind when they see the image.
 - c. Ask participants:
 - i. Did anyone’s response surprise you?
 - ii. Would anyone like to elaborate on their response?
3. **Whole Group – 10 Minutes**
 - a. Ask participants: What’s happening in this image?
 - b. Why do you think the artist drew this image?
 - c. What does this image have to say about teaching history?
4. **Whole Group – 15 Minutes**
 - a. Pass out *At the Un-National Monument Along the Canadian Border* by William Stafford. Have participants take turns reading the poem and discuss:
 - i. What is going on in this poem?
 - ii. Are there any monuments or sites in Idaho that connect to this poem?
 - iii. Why do you think some places are more important than others?
 - iv. Who decides which places are most important to a community?
5. **Small Groups – 15 Minutes**
 - a. Break participants into small groups of 2-3 and pass out *Of History and Hope*, by William Miller.
 - b. Ask participants:
 - i. What is this poem about?
 - ii. How can history be hopeful?
 - iii. How can we talk about our past with optimism?
6. **Large Group – 15 Minutes**
 - a. Bring participants back together in the large group to discuss:
 - i. Why should we teach history in school?
 - ii. What is the power of history?
 - iii. What is the power of hope?
7. **Wrap – Up – 10 Minutes**
 - a. Have participants go around again. Have participants say one word or phrase that come to mind when they consider Mark Twain’s quote, “History doesn’t repeat itself, but it often rhymes.”
 - b. Thank participants for coming and encourage them to keep talking!

Doing History**Additional Questions**

1. How is history different from “the past?”
2. How can people have different perspectives of the same event?
3. How important is it to include multiple perspectives of historical accounts?
4. What do we learn from history?
5. What stories are typically featured in your community’s museums and libraries?
6. What stories are left out that you want to learn more about in your community?
7. How do you learn about the history of your community?
8. Where do you go to learn about your community’s history?
9. How does learning about history differ from learning about your family’s past?
10. Has there been a time where you learned about history in a way different from how it was originally explained to you?
11. How does it feel to learn new information about history?
12. How do multiple perspectives help inform more comprehensive, rich, and interesting narratives?
13. What role does interpretation play when we talk about history?
14. What role do museums, libraries, and archives play in documenting our history?
15. Why is documenting our history important?
16. What should be included when we preserve our history?
17. Who’s voices should be preserved by museums, libraries, and archives? How does differ from whose voices are actually preserved?
18. Who’s voices do you seek out for information about the past?
19. What is the “American story?”

National Holidays

1. Begin by introducing yourself and your organization. Prepare attendees by explaining how you will facilitate the conversation. For example, *“Today we are going to be talking about national holidays. We will look at a couple of different texts and photos to help guide our conversation. I encourage you to listen to each other with respect and share your opinions and thoughts openly with the group.”*
2. **Introductions – 10 minutes**
 - a. Introduce yourself
 - b. Have participants go around the circle and name their **favorite national holiday**.
 - c. Ask participants:
 - i. Did anything stand out or surprise you?
 - ii. Would 1 or 2 people like to explain their response?
3. **Small Groups – 15 minutes**
 - a. Break Participants into groups of 2-3 and pass around Normal Rockwell’s *Freedom from Want* image.
 - b. Have participants discuss the image:
 - i. What’s happening in this photo?
 - ii. What message is this image trying to convey?
4. **Whole Group – 20 minutes**
 - a. Bring participants back to the larger group to discuss:
 - i. How do national holidays bring people together?
 - ii. How do national holidays represent bigger ideas about shared ideas?
 - iii. When do national holidays help tell a story?
 - iv. How important is a shared national identity?
5. **Small Groups – 20 minutes:**
 - a. Break participants into small groups of 2-3 and pass out the *2023 Columbus Day Presidential Proclamation* by former President Joe Biden.
 - b. Have participants discuss:
 - i. Is there anything in this statement that surprised you?
 - ii. How has the meaning of this holiday evolved over time?
6. **Whole Group – 15 minutes:**
 - a. Are there any other holidays where the meaning of the holiday has changed?
 - b. When do you celebrate a holiday versus commemorating?
 - c. Are there any new national holidays that you think should be created?
 - d. Are there any national holidays that should be changed?
7. **Wrap-Up:** Have everyone go around one more time and say one word or phrase that they think of when they think of national holidays.

National Holidays**Additional Questions**

1. How do national holidays differ from state holidays?
2. If you could establish a national holiday, what would it be?
3. How do holidays help us commemorate our history?
4. How should we commemorate national holidays with more difficult histories?
5. How do national holidays change over time?
6. What celebrations or festivals are important to your community?
7. How do holidays bring people together?
8. How are national holidays established?
9. How do you feel about changing or discontinuing national holidays?
10. What is the role of popular culture in national holidays?
11. What stories are associated with national holidays?
12. How do you feel about not everyone participating in national holidays?
13. How would you feel if Election Day became a national holiday?

Breaking Bread

1. Begin by introducing yourself and your organization. Prepare attendees by explaining how you will facilitate the conversation. For example, “*Today we are going to be talking about what “What food is most American?” We want to talk about how we connect to food and culture. We will look at a couple of different poems and photos to help guide our conversation. I encourage you to listen to each other*
2. Introductions- 5 minutes
 - a. Introduce yourself
 - b. Have participants go around and say which food they think is the most American.
 - c. Ask participants:
 - i. Did anyone’s response surprise you?
 - ii. Would anyone like to explain their response?
3. **Whole Group – 15 Minutes**
 - a. Pass out *Wonderbread* by Alfred Cornand have participants take turns reading the poem.
 - b. Ask participants:
 - i. What stands out to you about this poem?
 - ii. What is the author talking about?
 - iii. What food or meal do you think of when you read this poem?
 - iv. What memories do you associate with Wonder bread?
4. **Small Groups – 20 Minutes**
 - a. Break participants into groups of 2-3.
 - b. Pass out *In Praise of Okra* by January Gill O’Neiland have participants take turns reading the poem. Have participants discuss:
 - i. What is going on in this poem?
 - ii. What’s the author’s message in this poem?
 - iii. What foods do you connect with in the same way as the protagonist?
5. **Whole Group – 10 Minutes**
 - a. Have participants come back. Ask participants:
 - i. How does food connect us with our past?
 - ii. How does food connect us to each other?
6. **Whole Group – 15 Minutes**
 - a. Pass out *Help Save Liberty for Our Children* image. Ask Participants:
 - i. What’s happening in this image?
 - ii. How do hot dogs connect to the Statue of Liberty?
 - iii. What is American food?
 - iv. How do we define cuisine?
 - b. How does cuisine help define culture?
7. **Wrap- up – 5 minutes**
 - a. Have participants go around one more time. Have them end by asking them to say a word or phrase that comes to mind when they think of “American food.”

Breaking Bread**Additional Questions**

1. What first comes to mind when you think of American food?
2. What foods are distinctly American?
3. What foods are stereotyped as “American?”
4. What foods are not “American”?
5. How do we define “American” food?
6. What ingredients help define cuisine?
7. What does American food smell like?
8. What is the most underrated American food?
9. What is the most stereotyped food from your community?
10. What do you think about fusion cuisine?
11. What food have become Americanized over time?
12. How would you feel if your favorite food was changed to fit a different culture?
13. Where do you find “American” food?
14. Are there any beverages that you consider to be “American”?
15. What makes something “American”?

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A More Perfect Union

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American Experiment

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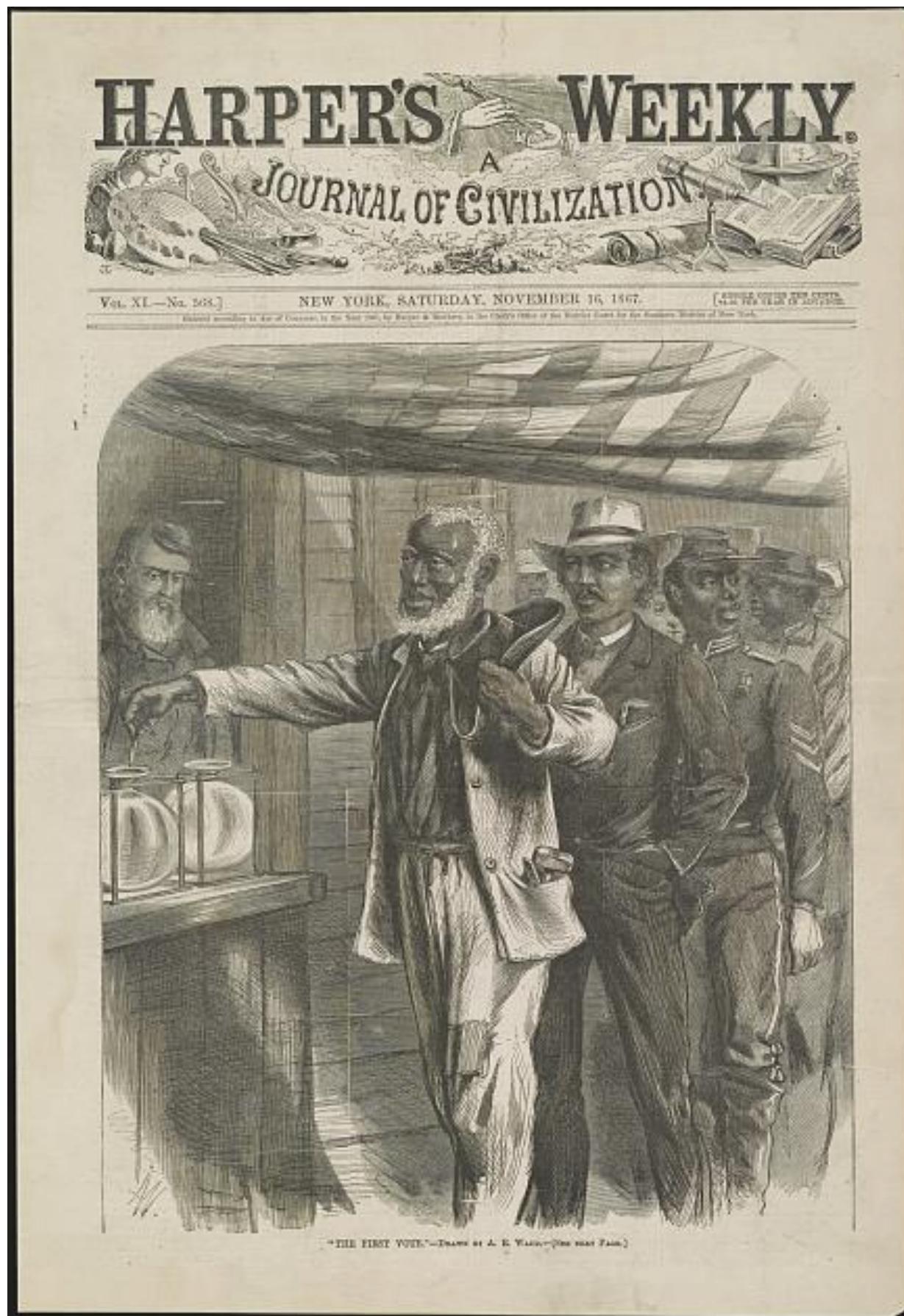
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14

THE AWAKENING

15



Left ignored, women always, strictly cast away.
Women's rights, women's trouble and distress,
Women's trouble for a right, but freedom comes with the day,
And the free must remember nothing less.

From the strife, remember those who strive—
The first defenders were, pliant and true,
Who gave up honor as a mother gives as love,
Forget them not, and this remember, too:

Now at the later call, come forth and strike,
Women's rights, upon whose side, and support,
Brave upon high, come forth in thy onward flight,
Each one uttering the half of her don't want,

They came from ill and want, from misery and strife,
Those who knew only life, and learned worse of death,
Circa and the masters of life, and the masters of death,
Men are true heroes or not, but they came, they came,

The slopes of earth were stirred, and earth was raw,
Those who knew well pain with the terror of eternal danger;
And other hosts knew that, that heavier comes death more,
Women to women would never again be strangers,
Alice Dyer, 1880.

To Be Twenty Again
Chude Pam Allen

To be twenty again,
believing with such fervor,
sure of the way,
committed unto death if need be.
Willing to offer myself without reservation,
to share my talents and hopes
without equivocation.

To be twenty again,
believing change is possible
because I have changed,
believing barriers can be lifted,
distrust transcended
because I have known friendship
across the color line, deep friendship.

To be twenty again
and to know the power
of a social movement
that transforms its participants
as well as the world,
to know I've found a place, a way of life that allows love of God
and commitment to justice
to flourish side by side.

To fall in love again and again
with life and idealism as it manifests
first in one and then another
young man's eyes.
I lived so intensely,
believed so absolutely,
felt so acutely.
I had the energy to do so
and lacked the experience
to feel afraid or use caution.

I grew outside the bounds
of my white, middle class upbringing.
I grew outside the experience

of my professors at college.
There were times of connection
and transcendence,
times of anger
and fear of losing all we'd worked for.
There were times of trust
and times the trust shriveled
in the light of a sharp afternoon.

Oh, to be twenty again
and refuse compromise.
To believe justice is attainable.
That love will replace greed.
To believe people can live
and work in mutual respect for one another.

To be twenty again
and believe it is all possible.

America**Claude McKay**

Although she feeds me bread of bitterness,
And sinks into my throat her tiger's tooth,
Stealing my breath of life, I will confess
I love this cultured hell that tests my youth.

Her vigor flows like tides into my blood,
Giving me strength erect against her hate,
Her bigness sweeps my being like a flood.

Yet, as a rebel fronts a king in state,
I stand within her walls with not a shred
Of terror, malice, not a word of jeer.

Darkly I gaze into the days ahead,
And see her might and granite wonders there,
Beneath the touch of Time's unerring hand,
Like priceless treasures sinking in the sand.

Ghazal: America the Beautiful**Alicia Ostriker**

Do you remember our earnestness our sincerity
in first grade when we learned to sing America

The Beautiful along with the Star-Spangled Banner
and say the Pledge of Allegiance to America

We put our hands over our first grade hearts
we felt proud to be citizens of America

I said One Nation Invisible until corrected
maybe I was right about America

School days school days dear old Golden Rule Days
when we learned how to behave in America

What to wear, how to smoke, how to despise our parents
who didn't understand us or America

Only later learning the *Banner* and the *Beautiful*
live on opposite sides of the street in America

Only later discovering the Nation is divisible
by money by power by color by gender by sex America

We comprehend it now this land is two lands
one triumphant bully one still hopeful America

Imagining amber waves of grain blowing in the wind
purple mountains and no homeless in America

Sometimes I still put my hand tenderly on my heart
somehow or other still carried away by America



Open Memo To The Congressional Appropriations Committee And The Military Department Of Defense

Sandra Maria Esteves

To Whom It Does Concern:

Could we please have just one space flight,
one nine-million dollar adventure into the great breath,
so that we could divide the loaves and fishes
and put 900 more people to work for a year.

Or could we please have one nuclear missile,
so we can diffuse it, sell the used parts
for one-point-ten billion worth of more than just
rice krispies breakfast-lunch-dinners.

What if we could exchange an M-1 rifle for a solar reflector
so that our building could have heat all the time,
not wait for avaricious gun-toting landlords
to remember to call the oil company tomorrow
for the child next door with pneumonia today.

We would even accept a leftover bomber,
or one two-million dollar high tech space suit,
however patronizing it may seem,
or a decommissioned aircraft carrier to relieve tight housing
problems.

Its not much, is it?
When you add it up, pull together the sum total
of the four billion dollars-a-day catastrophe fantasy,
the whole is worse than its parts.

So to continue our list,
could you please refund on our next tax return
the difference between the limousines you drive,
and the tokens we do not have
to build our nation strong.

Signed,
The People of the Rest of the World



Old South Meeting House**January Gill O'Neil**

We draw breath from brick

step on stones, weather-worn,
cobbled and carved

with the story of this church,
this meeting house,
where Ben Franklin was baptized

and Phillis Wheatley prayed—a mouth-house
where colonists gathered
to plot against the crown.

This structure, with elegant curves
and round-topped windows, was the heart
of Boston, *the body of the people*,

survived occupation for preservation,
foregoing decoration
for conversation.

Let us gather in the box pews
once numbered and rented
by generations of families
held together like ribs
in the body politic. Let us gaze upon
the upper galleries to the free seats

where the poor and the town slaves
listened and waited and pondered
and prayed

for revolution.

Let us testify to the plight
of the well-meaning at the pulpit

with its sounding board high above,
congregations raising heads and hands to the sky.
We, the people—the tourists

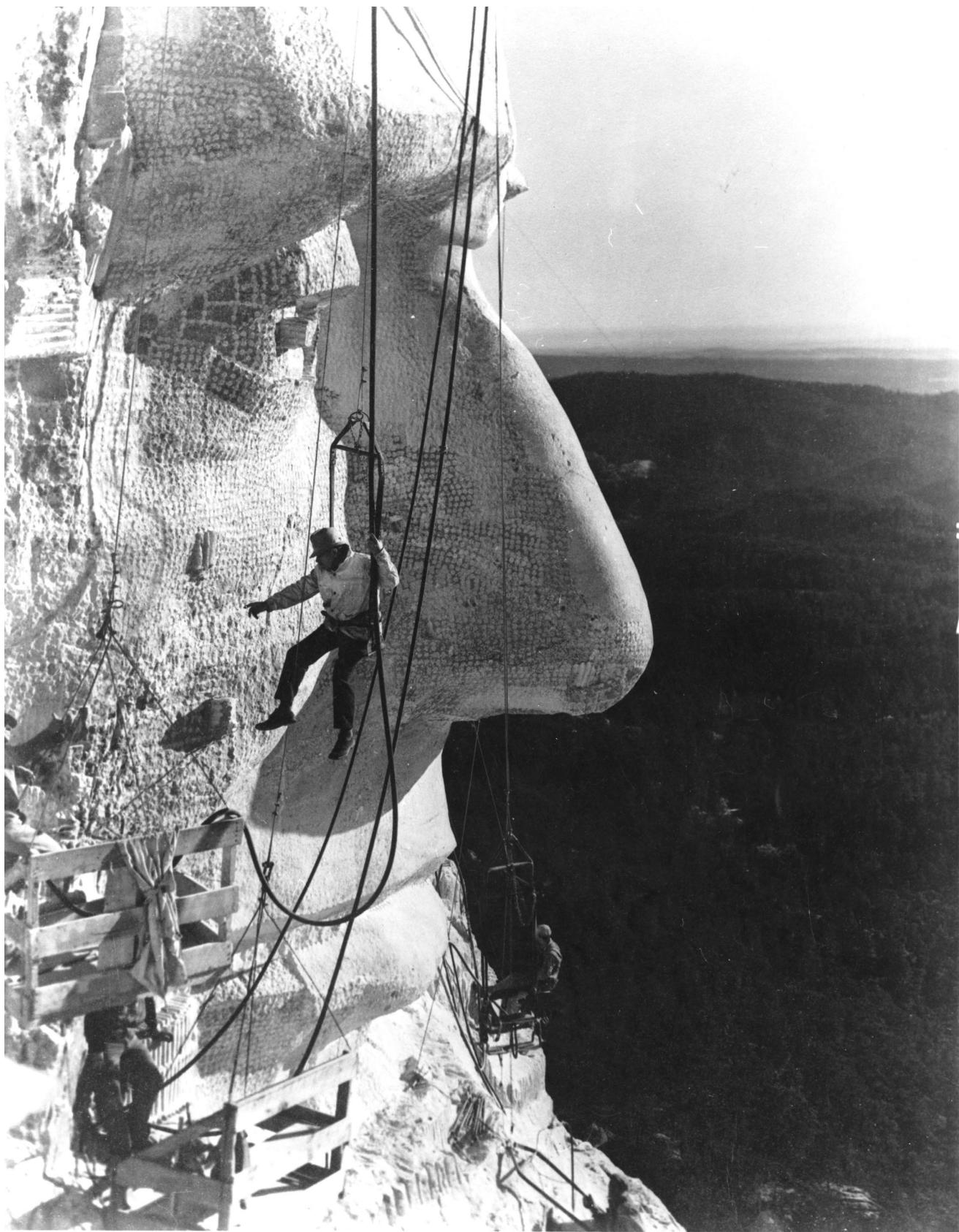
and townies—one nation under
this vaulted roof, exalted voices
speaking poetry out loud,

in praise and dissent.

We draw breath from brick. Ignite the fire in us.

Speak to us:

the language is hope.



At the Un-National Monument along the Canadian Border**William Stafford**

This is the field where the battle did not happen,
where the unknown soldier did not die.

This is the field where grass joined hands,
where no monument stands,
and the only heroic thing is the sky.

Birds fly here without any sound,
unfolding their wings across the open.
No people killed—or were killed—on this ground
hallowed by neglect and an air so tame
that people celebrate it by forgetting its name.



LITTLE RED SCHOOL HOUSE.

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Of History and Hope

BY MILLER WILLIAMS

We have memorized America,
how it was born and who we have been and where.

In ceremonies and silence we say the words,
telling the stories, singing the old songs.

We like the places they take us. Mostly we do.

The great and all the anonymous dead are there.

We know the sound of all the sounds we brought.

The rich taste of it is on our tongues.

But where are we going to be, and why, and who?

The disenfranchised dead want to know.

We mean to be the people we meant to be,
to keep on going where we meant to go.

But how do we fashion the future? Who can say how
except in the minds of those who will call it Now?

The children. The children. And how does our garden grow?

With waving hands—oh, rarely in a row—
and flowering faces. And brambles, that we can no longer allow.

Who were many people coming together
cannot become one people falling apart.

Who dreamed for every child an even chance
cannot let luck alone turn doorknobs or not.

Whose law was never so much of the hand as the head
cannot let chaos make its way to the heart.

Who have seen learning struggle from teacher to child
cannot let ignorance spread itself like rot.

We know what we have done and what we have said,
and how we have grown, degree by slow degree,
believing ourselves toward all we have tried to become—
just and compassionate, equal, able, and free.

All this in the hands of children, eyes already set
on a land we never can visit—it isn't there yet—
but looking through their eyes, we can see
what our long gift to them may come to be.

If we can truly remember, they will not forget.

A Proclamation on Columbus Day, 2023

Today, we celebrate all the Italian Americans, whose courage and character reflect and help define our Nation.

In 1891, 11 Italian Americans were murdered in one of the largest mass lynchings in our Nation's history. In the wake of this horrific attack, President Benjamin Harrison established Columbus Day in 1892. For so many people across our country, that first Columbus Day was a way to honor the lives that had been lost and to celebrate the hope, possibilities, and ingenuity Italian Americans have contributed to our country since before the birth of our republic.

More than a century later, we mark Columbus Day with that purpose — celebrating the heritage of Italian Americans, whose hands helped build our Nation and whose hearts have always carried faith in the American Dream. For many Italian Americans, the story of Christopher Columbus' voyage — from the Spanish port of Palos de la Frontera on behalf of Queen Isabella I and King Ferdinand II — remains a source of pride. It reflects the stories of trips across the Atlantic that so many Italian Americans grew up hearing at the dinner table, whether tales of ancestors who set sail on wooden boats across rough waters to begin new lives on our shores or grandparents who immigrated here with little more than hope in their hearts. These are stories of people leaving everything they knew and loved behind for the promise of opportunity in the United States.

Today, we honor those stories told around the dinner table and celebrate what these hopeful Italian American newcomers brought to our Nation. Italian Americans are educators, service members, doctors, engineers, artists, Government officials, and leaders and innovators in every field. The Italian American community is also a source of strength for our Nation's enduring relationship with Italy — an essential NATO ally and partner in the European Union. Together, we are working to address the challenges of our time, especially supporting the people of Ukraine in defense of their freedom.

America was founded on an idea: that we are all created equal, endowed by our creator with certain inalienable rights, and deserve to be treated equally throughout our lives. Though we have never fully lived up to that idea, our aspirations have never let us walk away from it either. Today, we honor all the Italian Americans who never walked away from our fundamental creed and who, for generations, have helped realize the full promise of our Nation.

In commemoration of Christopher Columbus' historic voyage 531 years ago, the Congress, by joint resolution of April 30, 1934, and modified in 1968 (36 U.S.C. 107), as amended, has requested the President proclaim the second Monday of October of each year as "Columbus Day."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR., President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim October 9, 2023, as Columbus Day. I direct that the flag of the United States be displayed on all public buildings on the appointed day in honor of our diverse history and all who have contributed to shaping this Nation.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this sixth day of October, in the year of our Lord two thousand twenty-three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and forty-eighth.

JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR.

OURS...to fight for



FREEDOM FROM WANT

Wonderbread
Alfred Corn

Loaf after loaf, in several sizes,
and never does it not look fresh,
as though its insides weren't moist
or warm crust not the kind that spices
a room with the plump aroma of toast.

Found on the table; among shadows
next to the kitchen phone; dispatched
FedEx (without return address, though).
Someone, possibly more than one
person, loves me. Well then, who?

Amazing that bread should be so weightless,
down-light when handled, as a me
dying to taste it takes a slice.

Which lasts just long enough to reach
my mouth, but then, at the first bite,

Nothing! Nothing but air, thin air
Oh. One more loaf of wonderbread,
only a pun for bread, seductive
visually, but you could starve.
Get rid of it, throw it in the river—

Beyond which, grain fields. Future food for the just
and the unjust, those who love, and do not love.

In Praise of Okra
January Gill O'Neil

No one believes in you
like I do. I sit you down on the table
& they overlook you for
fried chicken & grits,
crab cakes & hush puppies,
black-eyed peas & succotash
& sweet potatoes & watermelon.

Your stringy, slippery texture
reminds them of the creature
from the movie *Aliens*.

But I tell my friends if they don't like you
they are cheating themselves;
you were brought from Africa
as seeds, hidden in the ears and hair
of slaves.

Nothing was wasted in our kitchens.
We took the unused & the throwaways
& made feasts;
we taught our children
how to survive,
adapt.

So I write this poem
in praise of okra
& the cooks who understood
how to make something out of nothing.
Your fibrous skin
melts in my mouth—
green flecks of flavor,
still tough, unbruised,
part of the fabric of earth.
Soul food.

Additional Objects

The objects recommended in the discussion outlines are recommendations for use. Provided below are additional objects for each theme. You are welcome to use the objects for additional conversations on different themes.

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3. Adrienne Su, “Personal History,” 2019. Retrieved from: <https://poets.org/poem/personal-history>.

We The People



VOTES FOR WOMEN



NATIONAL AMERICAN WOMAN SUFFRAGE ASSOCIATION, 505 Fifth Avenue, New York City



The Stolen Party

by Liliana Heker (translated by Alberto Manguel)

As soon as she arrived she went straight to the kitchen to see if the monkey was there. It was: what a relief! She wouldn't have liked to admit that her mother had been right. Monkeys at a birthday? her mother had sneered. Get away with you, believing any nonsense you're told! She was cross, but not because of the monkey, the girl thought; it's just because of the party.

"I don't like you going," she told her. "It's a rich people's party."

"Rich people go to Heaven too," said the girl, who studied religion at school.

"Get away with Heaven," said the mother. The girl didn't approve of the way her mother spoke. She was barely nine, and one of the best in her class.

"I'm going because I've been invited," she said. "And I've been invited because Luciana is my friend. So there."

"Ah yes, your friend," her mother grumbled. She paused. "Listen, Rosaura," she said at last. "That one's not your friend. You know what you are to them? The maid's daughter, that's what."

Rosaura blinked hard: she wasn't going to cry. Then she yelled: "Shut up! You know nothing about being friends!"

Every afternoon she used to go to Luciana's house and they would both finish their homework while Rosaura's mother did the cleaning. They had their tea in the kitchen and they told each other secrets. Rosaura loved everything in the big house, and she also loved the people who lived there.

"I'm going because it will be the most lovely party in the whole world, Luciana told me it would. There will be a magician, and he will bring a monkey and everything."

The mother swung around to take a good look at her child, and pompously put her hands on her hips. Monkeys at a birthday? her mother had sneered. Get away with you, believing any nonsense you're told!

Rosaura was deeply offended. She thought it unfair of her mother to accuse other people of being liars simply because they were rich. Rosaura too wanted to be rich, of course. If one day she managed to live in a beautiful palace, would her mother stop loving her? She felt very sad. She wanted to go to that party more than anything else in the world.

"I'll die if I don't go," she whispered, almost without moving her lips.

And she wasn't sure whether she had been heard, but on the morning of the party she discovered that her mother had starched her Christmas dress. And in the afternoon, after washing her hair, her mother rinsed it in apple vinegar so that it would be all nice and shiny. Before going out, Rosaura admired herself in the mirror, with her white dress and glossy hair, and thought she looked terribly pretty.

Señora Ines also seemed to notice. As soon as she saw her, she said: "How lovely you look today, Rosaura."

Rosaura gave her starched skirt a light toss with her hands and walked into the party with a firm step. She said hello to Luciana and asked about the monkey. Luciana put on a secretive look and whispered into Rosaura's ear: "He's in the kitchen. But don't tell anyone, because it's a surprise."

Rosaura wanted to make sure. Carefully she entered the kitchen and there she saw it: deep in thought, inside its cage. It looked so funny that the girl stood there for a while, watching it, and later, every so often, she would slip out of the party unseen and go and admire it. Rosaura was the only one allowed into the kitchen. Señora Ines had said: "You yes, but not the others, they're much too boisterous, they might break something." Rosaura

had never broken anything. She even managed the jug of orange juice, carrying it from the kitchen into the dining room. She held it carefully and didn't spill a single drop. And Señora Ines had said: "Are you sure you can manage a jug as big as that?" Of course she could manage. She wasn't a butterfingers, like the others. Like that blonde girl with the bow in her hair.

As soon as she saw Rosaura, the girl with the bow had said: "And you? Who are you?"

"I'm a friend of Luciana," said Rosaura.

"No," said the girl with the bow, "you are not a friend of Luciana because I'm her cousin and I know all her friends. And I don't know you."

"So what," said Rosaura. "I come here every afternoon with my mother and we do our homework together."

"You and your mother do your homework together?" asked the girl, laughing.

"I and Luciana do our homework together," said Rosaura, very seriously. The girl with the bow shrugged her shoulders.

"That's not being friends," she said. "Do you go to school together?"

"No."

"So where do you know her from?" said the girl, getting impatient. Rosaura remembered her mother's words perfectly. She took a deep breath.

"I'm the daughter of the employee," she said. Her mother had said very clearly: "If someone asks, you say you're the daughter of the employee; that's all." She also told her to add "And proud of it." But Rosaura thought that never in her life would she dare say something of the sort.

"What employee?" said the girl with the bow. "Employee in a shop?"

"No," said Rosaura angrily. "My mother doesn't sell anything in any shop, so there."

"So how come she's an employee?" said the girl with the bow. Just then Señora Ines arrived saying shh shh, and asked Rosaura if she wouldn't mind helping serve out the hot dogs, as she knew the house so much better than the others.

"See?" said Rosaura to the girl with the bow, and when no one was looking she kicked her in the shin.

Apart from the girl with the bow, all the others were delightful. The one she liked best was Luciana, with her golden birthday crown; and then the boys. Rosaura won the sack race, and nobody managed to catch her when they played tag. When they split into two teams to play charades, all the boys wanted her for their side. Rosaura felt she had never been so happy in all her life.

But the best was still to come. The best came after Luciana blew out the candles. First the cake. Señora Ines had asked her to help pass the cake around, and Rosaura had enjoyed the task immensely, because everyone called out to her, shouting "Me, me!" Rosaura remembered a story in which there was a queen who had the power of life or death over her subjects. She had always loved that, having the power of life or death. To Luciana and the boys she gave the largest pieces, and to the girl with the bow she gave a slice so thin one could see through it. After the cake came the magician, tall and bony, with a fine red cape. A true magician: he could untie handkerchiefs by blowing on them and make a chain with links that had no openings. He could guess what cards were pulled out from a pack, and the monkey was his assistant. He called the monkey "partner."

"Let's see here, partner," he would say, "Turn over a card." And, "Don't run away, partner: time to work now." The final trick was wonderful. One of the children had to hold the monkey in his arms and the magician said he would make him disappear.

"What, the boy?" they all shouted.

"No, the monkey!" shouted the magician.

Rosaura thought that this was truly the most amusing party in the whole world. The magician asked a small fat boy to come and help, but the small fat boy got frightened almost at once and dropped the monkey on the floor. The magician picked him up carefully, whispered something in his ear, and the monkey nodded almost as if he understood.

"You mustn't be so unmanly, my friend," the magician said to the fat boy.

"What's unmanly?" said the fat boy.

The magician turned around as if to look for spies.

"A sissy," said the magician. "Go sit down." Then he stared at all the faces, one by one. Rosaura felt her heart tremble.

"You, with the Spanish eyes," said the magician. And everyone saw that he was pointing at her. She wasn't afraid. Neither holding the monkey, nor when the magician made him vanish; not even when, at the end the magician flung his red cape over Rosaura's head and uttered a few magic words ... and the monkey reappeared, chattering happily, in her arms. The children clapped furiously. And before Rosaura returned to her seat, the magician said: "Thank you very much, my little countess."

She was so pleased with the compliment that a while later, when her mother came to fetch her, that was the first thing she told her.

"I helped the magician and he said to me, 'Thank you very much, my little countess.'" It was strange because up to then Rosaura had thought that she was angry with her mother. All along Rosaura had imagined that she would say to her: "See that the monkey wasn't a lie?" But instead she was so thrilled that she told her mother all about the wonderful magician.

Her mother tapped her on the head and said: "So now we're a countess!"

But one could see that she was beaming. And now they both stood in the entrance, because a moment ago Señora Ines, smiling, had said: "Please wait here a second." Her mother suddenly seemed worried.

"What is it?" she asked Rosaura.

"What is what?" said Rosaura. "It's nothing; she just wants to get the presents for those who are leaving, see?"

She pointed at the fat boy and at a girl with pigtails who were also waiting there, next to their mothers. And she explained about the presents. She knew, because she had been watching those who left before her. When one of the girls was about to leave, Señora Ines would give her a bracelet. When a boy left, Señora Ines gave him a yo-yo. Rosaura preferred the yo-yo because it sparkled, but she didn't mention that to her mother. Her mother might have said: "So why don't you ask for one, you blockhead?" That's what her mother was like. Rosaura didn't feel like explaining that she'd be horribly ashamed to be the odd one out. Instead she said: "I was the best-behaved at the party." And she said no more because Señora Ines came out into the hall with two bags, one pink and one blue. First she went up to the fat boy, gave him a yo-yo out of the blue bag, and the fat boy left with his mother.

Then she went up to the girl and gave her a bracelet out of the pink bag, and the girl with the pigtails left as well.

Finally she came up to Rosaura and her mother. She had a big smile on her face and Rosaura liked that. Señora Ines looked down at her, then looked up at her mother, and then said something that made Rosaura proud: "What a marvelous daughter you have, Herminia."

For an instant, Rosaura thought that she'd give her two presents: the bracelet and the yo-yo. Señora Ines bent down as if about to look for something. Rosaura also leaned forward, stretching out her arm. But she never completed the movement. Señora Ines didn't look in the pink bag. Nor did she look in the blue bag. Instead she rummaged6 in her purse. In her hand appeared two bills.

"You really and truly earned this," she said handing them over. "Thank you for all your help, my pet."

Rosaura felt her arms stiffen, stick close to her body, and then she noticed her mother's hand on her shoulder. Instinctively she pressed herself against her mother's body. That was all. Except her eyes. Rosaura's eyes had a cold, clear look that fixed itself on Señora Ines's face.

Señora Ines, motionless, stood there with her hand outstretched. As if she didn't dare draw it back. As if the slightest change might shatter an infinitely delicate balance.

Christmas on the Border, 1929 by Alberto Rios

1929, the early days of the Great Depression.
The desert air was biting, but the spirit of the season was alive.

Despite hard times, the town of Nogales, Arizona, determined
They would host a grand Christmas party

For the children in the area—a celebration that would defy
The gloom of the year, the headlines in the paper, and winter itself.

In the heart of town, a towering Christmas tree stood,
A pine in the desert.

Its branches, they promised, would be adorned
With over 3,000 gifts. 3,000.

The thought at first was to illuminate the tree like at home,
With candles, but it was already a little dry.

Needles were beginning to contemplate jumping.
A finger along a branch made them all fall off.

People brought candles anyway. The church sent over
Some used ones, too. The grocery store sent

Some paper bags, which settled things.
Everyone knew what to do.

They filled the bags with sand from the fire station,
Put the candles in them, making a big pool of lighted luminarias.

From a distance the tree was floating in a lake of light—
Fire so normally a terror in the desert, but here so close to miracle.

For the tree itself, people brought garlands from home, garlands
Made of everything, walnuts and small gourds and flowers,

Chilies, too—the chilies themselves looking
A little like flames.

The townspeople strung them all over the beast—

It kept getting bigger, after all, with each new addition,
This curious donkey whose burden was joy.
At the end, the final touch was tinsel, tinsel everywhere, more tinsel.

Children from nearby communities were invited, and so were those
From across the border, in Nogales, Sonora, a stone's throw away.

But there was a problem. *The border.*
As the festive day approached, it became painfully clear—

The children in Nogales, Sonora, would not be able to cross over.
They were, quite literally, on the wrong side of Christmas.

Determined to find a solution, the people of Nogales, Arizona,
Collaborated with Mexican authorities on the other side.

In a gesture as generous as it was bold, as happy as it was cold:
On Christmas Eve, 1929,

For a few transcendent hours,
The border moved.

Officials shifted it north, past city hall, in this way bringing
The Christmas tree within reach of children from both towns.

On Christmas Day, thousands of children—
American and Mexican, Indigenous and orphaned—

Gathered around the tree, hands outstretched,
Eyes wide, with shouting and singing both.

Gifts were passed out, candy canes were licked,
And for one day, there was no border.

When the last present had been handed out,
When the last child returned home,

The border resumed its usual place,
Separating the two towns once again.

For those few hours, however, the line in the sand disappeared.
The only thing that mattered was Christmas.

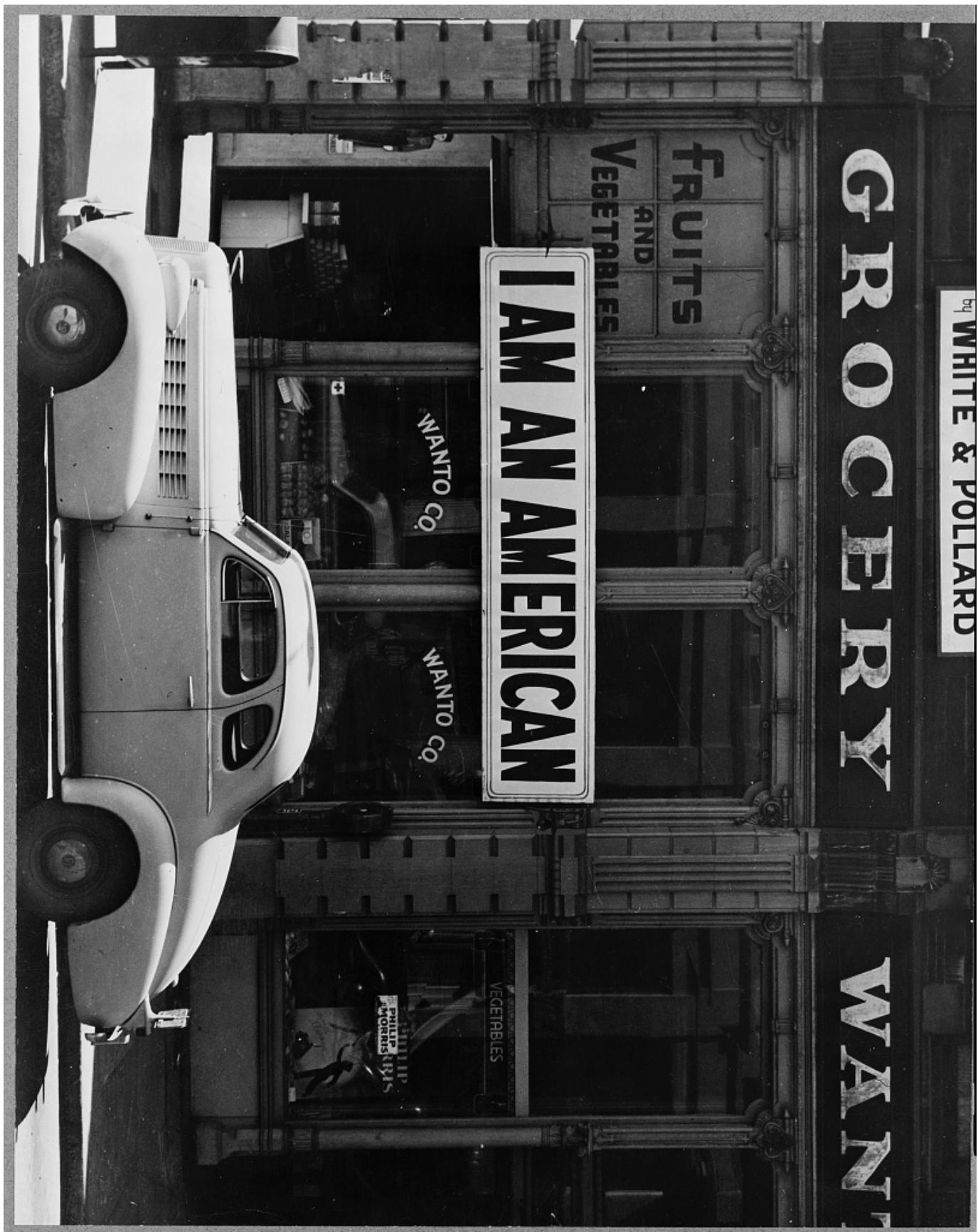
Newspapers reported no incidents that day, nothing beyond
The running of children, their pockets stuffed with candy and toys,

Milling people on both sides,
The music of so many peppermint candies being unwrapped.

On that chilly December day, the people of Nogales
Gathered and did what seemed impossible:

However quietly regarding the outside world,
They simply redrew the border.

In doing so, they brought a little more warmth to the desert winter.
On the border, on this day, they had a problem and they solved it.



by WHITE & POLLARD



A More Perfect Union



BORN TO COMMAND.

OF VETO MEMORY.



HAD I BEEN CONSULTED.

KING ANDREW THE FIRST.

Practice Standing Unleashed and Clean

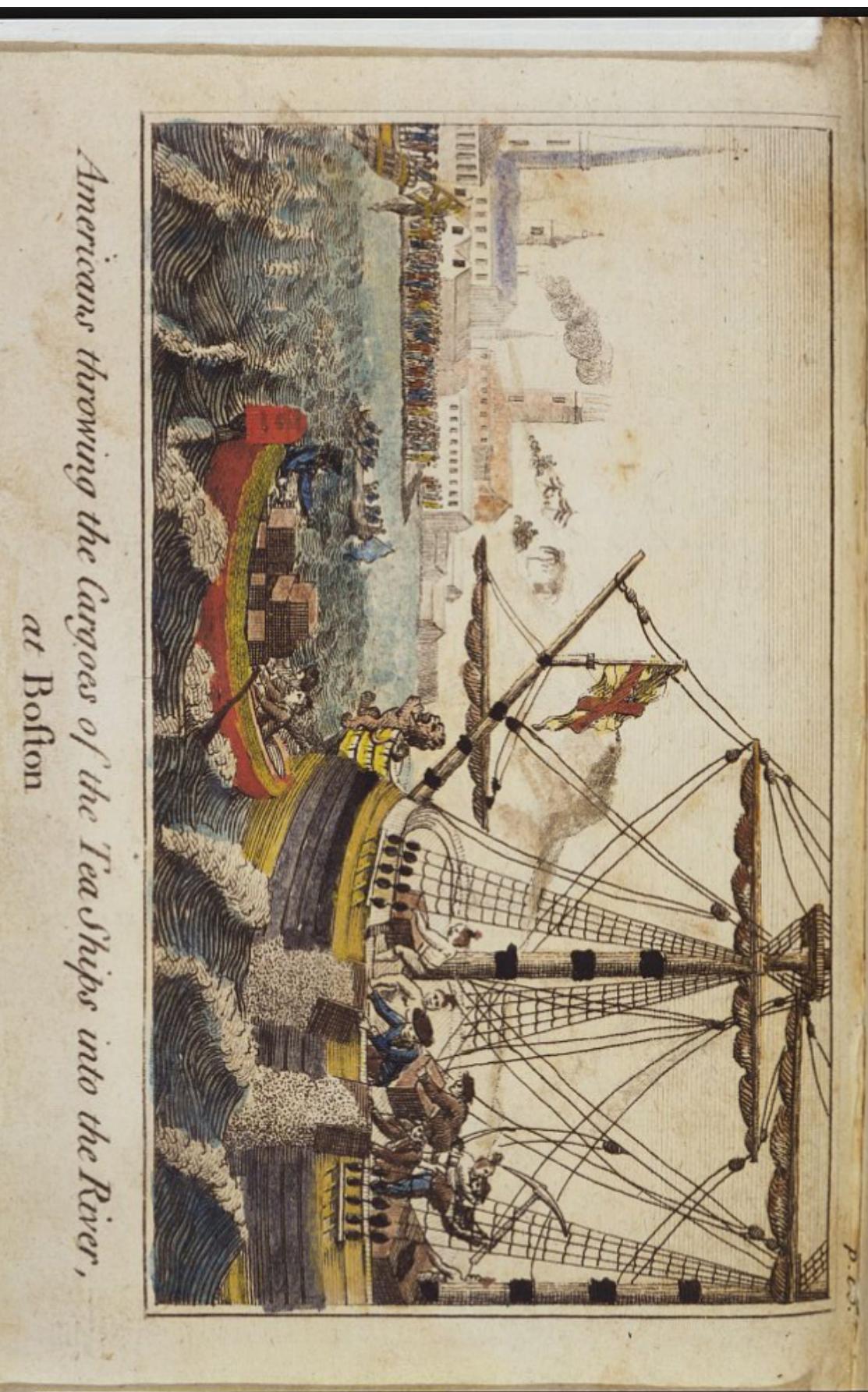
Patricia Smith

Hide the awkward jolt of jawline, the fluttering eye, that wide
brazen slash of boat-burned skin. Count each breath in order
to pacify the bloodless roiling just beneath the rib, to squelch
the mushrooming boom of tumor. Give fever another name.

I open my mouth, just to moan, but instead cluttered nouns,
so unAmerican, spew from my throat and become steam
in the room. That heat ripples through the meandering queue
of souls and someone who was once my uncle grows dizzy
with not looking at me. I am asked to temporarily unbutton
the clawing children from my heavy skirt, to pull the rough
linen blouse over my head and through my thick salted hair.

A last shelter thuds hard, pools around my feet on the floor.
I traveled with a whole chattering country's restless mass
weakening my shoulders. But I offer it as both yesterday
and muscle. I come to you America, scrubbed almost clean,
but infected with memory and the bellow of broiling spices
in a long-ago kitchen. I come with a sickness insistent upon
root in my body, a sickness that may just be a frantic twist
from one life's air to another. I ask for nothing but a home
with windows of circled arms, for a warm that overwhelms

the tangled sounds that say my name. I ask for the beaten
woman with her torch uplifted to find me here and loose
my new face of venom and virus. I have practiced standing
unleashed and clean. I have practiced the words I know.
So I pray this new country receive me, stark naked now,
forearms chapped raw, although I am ill in underneath ways.
I know that I am freakish, wildly fragrant, curious land. I stink
of seawater and the oversea moonwash I conjured to restart
and restart my migrant heart. All I can be is here, stretched
between solace and surrender, terrified of the dusty mark
that identifies me as poison in every one of the wrong ways.
I could perish here on the edge of everything. Or the chalk
mark could be a wing on my breastbone, unleashing me
in the direction of light. Someone will help me find my clothes
and brush the salt from my hair. I am marked perfect, and
I hear the word *heal* in a voice I thought I brought from home.



CHRISTMAS CAME EARLY THIS YEAR, 1965 by Rev. Bob Beech

Christmas came early this year:

It came in the eyes of a man who received his first paycheck...
at the age of forty-seven

(He had been in debt picking cotton before.)

It came when dark brown eyes and kinky hair
sat next to blue eyes and long flaxen braids in a class
which had been disgustingly pale until now.

It came at the voting booths where black and white candidates vied (albeit a mite unevenly)
for the elective offices of the land for the first time.

It came as a bit of a scare to whites used to exercising power unquestioningly and often unfairly
when some black throats announced that they too might use power.

It came not upon a midnight clear but in the hot sun as thousands marched down roads
to finish a walk interrupted by a shot in the back.

It came gradually...as for the first time
a very few whites began to ask us what we've been doing for two years —
and if they could help, maybe.

It came through [other white] folks who moved in next door with kids they would let play with ours...
a long awaited development.

And, glory-hallelujah, it came when they didn't take their kids away when other, darker, kids came
playing too.

But Christmas ain't coming fast enuf:

In factories grudgingly spotted with a few black faces where mostly white women work
who hire maids at \$15/week.

On roads still dusty adjacent to the power structure's neat concrete curbstones, good lights,
sewers,
good lights, running water, etc.

In homes where black men died at the hands of white cops and other bigots and bullies who are
still free

At the now-quiet, once-cheerful Headstart Centers closed now,
while grown men play politics with the lives of kindergarten-aged children.

In northern, suburban, white, ghettos where "RESTRICTED" means keep black folks out
and is often the unwritten law.

In jungles where villagers die as the jelly-gas spills into homes where "enemy" and onlookers look
alike...

So we get them all, just to be sure.

How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given, So God imparts to human hearts the blessings
of his heaven. No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin, where meek soul will receive
him still, the
dear Christ enters in.

BE by Lulu Westbrook Griffin

I never resented sound Truth
Where Parents and Teachers met
All the values and principles instilled
In Me, I won't ever forget.

"You can be anything
You want to be"
Was all I ever heard
No matter how tough
My classes seemed
That was my Teachers favorite word.

Often, mom would say
In words so soft to Me
"My dear daughter girl, you
Can Be, whatever you want to Be."

"Not only because in America
You can see what you want to see,"
But what more importantly
In our Democracy is,
You can Be what you choose to Be!

Power of Place

Learning to love America by Shirley Geok-lin Lim

because it has no pure products

because the Pacific Ocean sweeps along the coastline

because the water of the ocean is cold

and because land is better than ocean

because I say we rather than they

because I live in California

I have eaten fresh artichokes

and jacaranda bloom in April and May

because my senses have caught up with my body

my breath with the air it swallows

my hunger with my mouth

because I walk barefoot in my house

because I have nursed my son at my breast

because he is a strong American boy

because I have seen his eyes redden when he is asked who he is

because he answers I don't know

because to have a son is to have a country

because my son will bury me here

because countries are in our blood and we bleed them

because it is late and too late to change my mind

because it is time.

Doing History

The Acceptance by Raymond Antrobus

Dad's house stands again, four years
after being demolished. I walk in.
He lies in bed, licks his rolling paper,
and when I ask *Where have you been?*
We buried you, he says *I know*,

I know. I lean into his smoke, tell him
I went back to Jamaica. *I met your brothers*,
losing you made me need them. He says
something I don't hear. *What?* Moving lips,
no sound. I shake my head. He frowns.

Disappears. I wake in the hotel room,
heart drumming. I get up slowly, the floor
is wet. I wade into the bathroom,
my father stands by the sink, all the taps
running. He laughs and takes

my hand, squeezes.
His ring digs into my flesh. I open my eyes.
I'm by a river, a shimmering sheet
of green marble. Red ants crawl up
an oak tree's flaking bark. My hands

are cold mud. I follow the tall grass
by the riverbank, the song. My Orisha,
Oshun in gold bracelets and earrings, scrubs
her yellow dress in the river. I wave, *Hey!*
She keeps singing. The dress turns the river

gold and there's my father surfacing.
He holds a white and green drum. I watch him
climb out of the water, drip toward Oshun.
They embrace. My father beats his drum.
With shining hands, she signs: *Welcome*.

My father beats his drum.

Memory by Lawson Fusao Inada

Memory is an old Mexican woman
sweeping her yard with a broom.

She has grown even smaller now,
residing at that vanishing point
decades after one dies,
but at some times, given
the right conditions—
an ordinary dream, or practically
anything in particular—
she absolutely looms,
assuming the stature
she had in the neighborhood.

This was the Great Valley,

and we had swept in
to do the grooming.

We were on the move, tending
what was essentially
someone else's garden.

Memory's yard was all that
in miniature, in microcosm:
rivers for irrigation,
certain plants, certain trees
ascertained by season.

Without formal acknowledgment,
she was most certainly
the head of a community, American.

Memory had been there forever.

We settled in around her;
we brought the electricity
of blues and baptized gospel,
ancient adaptations of icons,
spices, teas, fireworks, trestles,
newly acquired techniques
of conflict and healing, common
concepts of collective survival. . .

Memory was there all the while.

Her house, her shed, her skin,
were all the same—weathered—
and she didn't do anything, especially,
except hum as she moved;
Memory, in essence, was unmemorable.

Yet, ask any of us who have long since left,
who have all but forgotten that adulterated place
paved over and parceled out by the powers that be,
and what we remember, without even choosing to,

Personal History

Adrienne Su

The world's largest Confederate monument

was too big to perceive on my earliest trips to the park.

Unlike my parents, I was not an immigrant
but learned, in speech and writing, to represent.

Picnicking at the foot and sometimes peak

of the world's largest Confederate monument, -,
we raised our Cokes to the first Georgian president.

His daughter was nine like me, but Jimmy Carter,

unlike my father, was not an immigrant.

Teachers and tour guides stressed the achievement

of turning three vertical granite acres into art.

Since no one called it a Confederate monument,
it remained invisible, like outdated wallpaper meant

long ago to be stripped. Nothing at Stone Mountain Park

echoed my ancestry, but it's normal for immigrants
not to see themselves in landmarks. On summer nights,

fireworks and laser shows obscured, with sparks,

the world's largest Confederate monument.

Our story began when my parents arrived as immigrants.