



REFLECTIONS

We suggest the following prose and poems for reflection.

“You might as well expect all the rivers to run backward as that any man who was born free should be contented penned up and denied liberty to go where he pleases. If you tie a horse to a stake, do you expect him to grow fat? If you pen an Indian up on a small spot of earth, and compel him to stay there, he will not be contented, nor will he grow and prosper. I have asked some of the Great White Chiefs where they got their authority to say to the Indian that he shall stay in one place, while he sees the white man going where they please. They cannot tell me.

Let me be a free man, free to travel, free to stop, free to work, free to trade where I choose, free to choose my own teachers, free to follow the religion of my fathers, free to talk, think, and act for myself – and I will obey every law or submit to the penalty.”

—Hin-hah-too-yah-lat-kekht
(Chief Joseph), Nez Perce

Published in the book “Freedom and Indigenous Constitutionalism” by John Borrows



Ginny Doctor wrote this while traveling by train to New York City to present two workshops at the UN Women's Forum. The route travels along the Mohawk River, her aboriginal homelands. While she has traveled that route many times, a great sadness came over her, probably because of her work on the Doctrine of Discovery. Anyway, she took up pen and paper and wrote down her reflection on "While Traveling on a Train going East."

While traveling on a train going East . . .

*Sadness surrounds me
traveling through aboriginal homelands
See things that others can't
Longhouses, smoke billowing from the center
surrounded by wooden palisades
Brown women tending the Three Sisters
Corn, beans and squash
Men wandering through the bush
hunting for deer and other sustenance
Children running through the woods
playing games, laughing
Mohawk River flows
Creator's artery bringing fish for harvest*



*waterway for travel
Can smell the sweetgrass
the strawberries, first fruit of summer
But then I see blood
My ancestors covered in red lifelessness
Settlers blood too
Who was right, who was wrong?
Both wanted good life, good land
Now I see farmlands
wonder if they grow the Three Sisters
See hard pavement
that was once soft trail
good to walk with deerskin moccasins
Old stone buildings and homes
carved out of once pristine land
Now replace Longhouses
and a good, Creator given life
that was before
We are left with Kenolonkkwa,
The great love from the ancestors
and with that we go on
to grieve and heal
to be strong like our ancestors
To keep the Good Mind*

—gdoctor, March 2018



What did you do once you knew?

“It’s 3:23 in the morning and I’m awake... because
my great great grandchildren won’t let me sleep.
My great great grandchildren ask me in dreams,
What did you do while the planet was plundered?
What did you do when the earth was unraveling?
surely you did something?...
When the seasons started failing?
surely you did something?
As the mammals, reptiles, and birds were all
dying?
surely you did something?
Did you fill the streets with protest when
democracy was stolen?
What did you do once you knew?

—(Excerpts from *Hieroglyphic Stairway*,
a poem by Drew Dellinger)