

of all places,
home is the only one
I have ever returned
But I am not native
here; I, transient

This American home
a defective quarter
two/faced-like
a shifting target
We, the people,
with poor aim

First - It's worth its weight
in destiny manifested
Mother's hushed tone
Imparted to her son :
"before Kentucky
there was *plantation*"
And the weight
of implication

And also second
generation : migrant Anatolian,
By way of Lebanon and Levant
where carpets were woven
or Orthodox practiced -
then ethnically bleached
by force of cleansing

Home! is a place that brokers peace in the Balkan states
Home! cleansed neighborhoods with highways and redlines
(cut in the outline of a cadaver, gerrymandered)
Home! is both a first in flight and a race riot

Decent people live here, decently
and indecently also
in balaclava, mask, or hood, because this too is
Home! It comes costly
on memory, writ with American Flag™
or textbook black-and-white-and-banned
And yet forging on with immortalized words
cooling in this crucible:
We wear the mask

We live here, but the wounds carve deep
into the flesh mask of centuries :
bound past perfect future present
so exhaustively uncorrected
Here, we are together openly
laboring to repair and remedy
or else suture shut

Prompt: Where We Belong—a chance to express what home, community, and identity mean to you.

I belong(ed) to Maryland
the year Martin died, when the seed planted in winter
by fall had tried and failed to grow
the land where Harriet set souls ablaze
and cast them free to go, where I squatted, squandering opportunities

Survived be(loved) D.C.
as the jungle strangled my words, while gunfire reigned supreme
where God had my attention, but it was hard, so very hard to think
death stood tall, walking about
openly, fearlessly

Reared in Texas
wandered the freeway loops in search of myself and my words
where the most valuable lessons were on the page
after my ego
and griding teeth and axes was of no consequence

Raised by California
where art was humanity
humanity was art on the tip of my tongue, a little
resigned to process as verb
not simply noun and adjective

Grew up in Ohio
relit the fire Harriet set
five score and nine years before
under my own self, owned myself
stopped asking people to give me what they did not have
and where my seed burst into bloom

Give Quiche a Chance At the Coexist Buffet

Notice our tabbouleh,
how cozy it gets next to the knish.
Imagine scooping from steam pans
without diplomatic sanctions.
Here a little Israel on a plate
next to a small pile of Lebanon
is a friendly truce.
There are no tariffs between
chicken tandoori
and chicken tortellini.
The hot dogs are not getting catty
with the Kung Pao pork.
Who knew that beef bourguignon
has absolutely zero beef
lying next to Baja barbacoa?
The spätzle and the stroganoff
were never in a spat.
Give quiche a chance.
Even the once volatile Tabasco
is no longer nuclear.
Taste how flavors mingle
without ire and coalesce
into oneness with one
destination—a pilgrimage,
not to Mount Calvary,
the Wailing Wall or Mecca,
but to the embassy of
a nonpartisan stomach.
So drizzle honey in swirls
over real Greek yogurt.
Let cultures blend to become
every language on your tongue.
Pray for world quiche.
Kindness, hope and love,
is the perfect piece.