

## LET AMERICA BE AMERICA AGAIN

Let America be America again.  
Let it be the dream it used to be.  
Let it be the pioneer on the plain  
Seeking a home where he himself is free.

(America never was America to me.)

Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed —  
Let it be that great strong land of love  
Where never kings connive nor tyrants scheme  
That any man be crushed by one above.

(It never was America to me.)

O, let my land be a land where Liberty  
Is crowned with no false patriotic wreath,  
But opportunity is real, and life is free,  
Equality is in the air we breathe.

(There's never been equality for me,  
Nor freedom in this "homeland of the free.")

Say, who are you that mumbles in the dark?  
And who are you that draws your veil across the stars?

I am the poor white, fooled and pushed apart,  
I am the Negro bearing slavery's scars.  
I am the red man driven from the land,  
I am the immigrant clutching the hope I seek —  
And finding only the same old stupid plan  
Of dog eat dog, of mighty crush the weak.

I am the young man, full of strength and hope,  
Tangled in that ancient endless chain  
Of profit, power, gain, of grab the land!  
Of grab the gold! Of grab the ways of satisfying need!  
Of owning everything for one's own greed!

I am the farmer, bondsman to the soil.  
I am the worker sold to the machine.  
I am the Negro, servant to you all.  
I am the people, humble, hungry, mean —  
Hungry yet today despite the dream.  
Beaten yet today — O, Pioneers!  
I am the man who never got ahead,  
The poorest worker bartered through the years.

Yet I am the one who dreamt our basic dream  
In that Old World while still a serf of kings,  
Who dreamt a dream so strong, so brave, so true,  
That even yet its mighty daring sings  
In every brick and stone, in every furrow turned  
That's made America the land it has become.  
O, I'm the man who sailed those early seas  
In search of what I meant to be my home —  
For I'm the one who left dark Ireland's shore,  
And Poland's plain, and England's grassy lea,  
And torn from Black Africa's strand I came  
To build a "homeland of the free."

The free?

Who said the free? Not me?  
Surely not me? The millions on relief today?  
The millions shot down when we strike?  
The millions who have nothing for our pay?  
For all the dreams we've dreamed  
And all the songs we've sung  
And all the hopes we've held  
And all the flags we've hung,  
The millions who have nothing for our pay —  
Except the dream that's almost dead today.

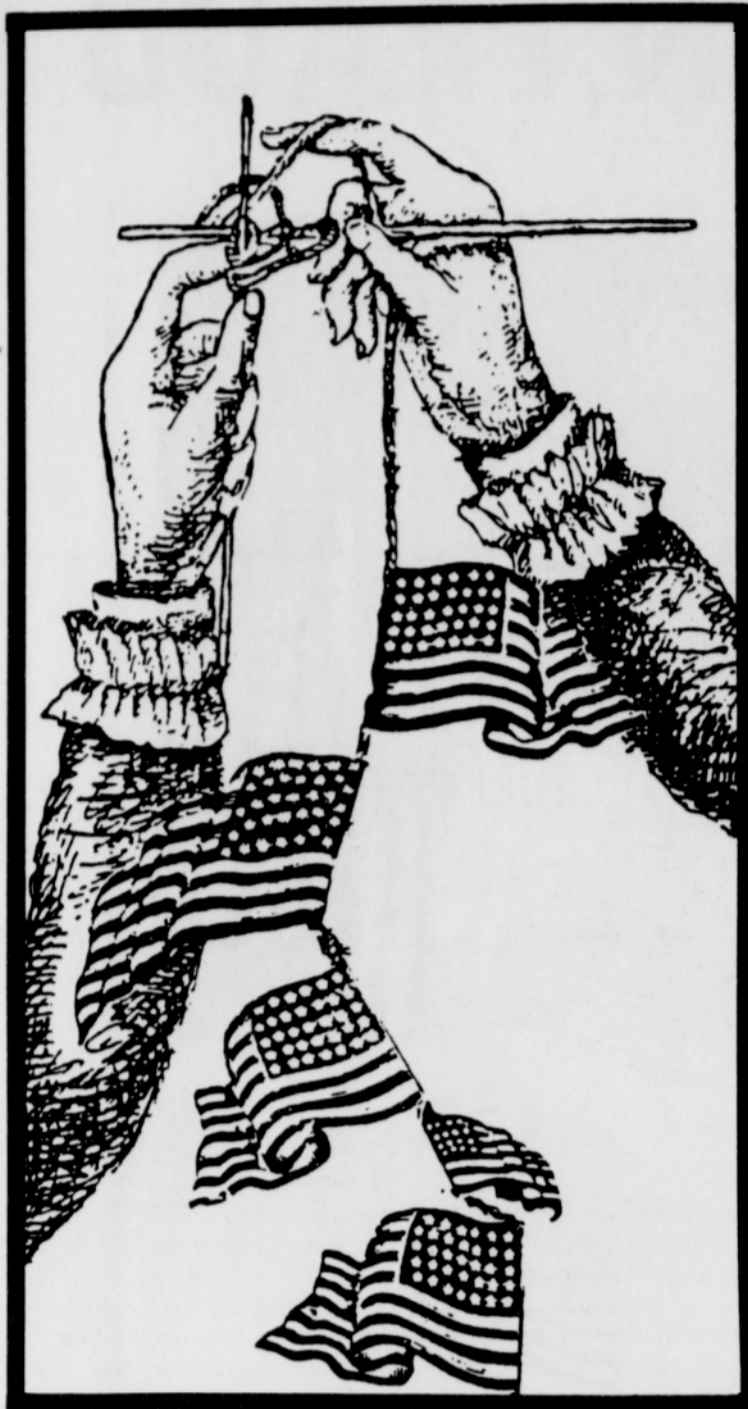
O, let America be America again —  
The land that never has been yet —  
And yet must be — the land where every man is free.  
The land that's mine — the poor man's, Indian's, Negro's, ME —  
Who made America,  
Whose sweat and blood, whose faith and pain,  
Whose hand at the foundry, whose plow in the rain,  
Must bring back our mighty dream again.

Sure, call me any ugly name you choose —  
The steel of freedom does not stain.  
From those who live like leeches on the people's lives,  
We must take back our land again,  
America!

O, yes,  
I say it plain,  
America never was America to me,  
And yet I swear this oath —  
America will be!

Out of the rack and ruin of our gangster death,  
The rape and rot of graft, and stealth, and lies,  
We, the people, must redeem  
The land, the mines, the plants, the rivers.  
The mountains and the endless plain —  
All, the stretch of these great green states —  
And make America again!

LANGSTON HUGHES (1902-1967)



GERALD MOSS

## POETRY

## OUR REVOLUTION

our revolution  
dried dreams into paper scattered  
in gusts of unanswerable questions,

it scooped up stars from an eastern sky  
just to prove they were imitation diamonds  
junked in a downtown pawnshop,

it supplanted your memory  
with molotov cocktails stored in mason jars,

it kicked down the latticework of thousands  
of embracing vines with steel-toed boots  
to be used for kindling,

it shot a hole right through a sunflower  
sending seeds into a chaos of black crows  
pecking at shells,

it eclipsed passion with the cold-blooded  
fist of irreverence and cast an anemic shadow  
over the future,

its leopard teeth ripped the meat from my bones  
and then fractured my skeleton against a wall  
of indifferent bricks,

it rolled out of our tongues into giant runways  
for fighter planes and squadrons of metallic flies,

it yanked away the net and then cut the trapeze ropes  
as you hung by your knees and I spun off into a triple somersault  
in an amphitheater of suspended faces,

it stole the script lines and turned up the hue, tint,  
and volume of a television soap opera,

it packed up your boxes in one afternoon,

it measured desire against truth.

but I watered the paper with ink, the diamonds found their ways  
into treasure boxes, the mason jars exploded in your own mind,  
the wood lured our rage into a pit of ash, earth enveloped the  
seeds to harvest new flowers, the fist opened into a hand made  
to work, my bones healed crooked and more strong, our runways  
sank into oceans of speechless kisses, the trapeze act flew off  
into the dreams of retired clowns, the TV picture tube blew  
and applied for a library card, the crones recorded an album,  
you opened all of your boxes, and the scale of truth and desire  
teetered for weeks.

because, it was not, after all, the war to end all wars,  
but rather a mutiny of passions, and the grand pageant of our  
imperfections.

~JUANITA HUEBNER

## WHEN THE PRESIDENT TALKS TO GOD

When the President talks to God  
Are the conversations brief or long?  
Does he ask to rape our women's rights  
And send poor farm kids off to die?  
Does God suggest an oil hike  
When the President talks to God?

When the President talks to God  
Are the consonants all hard or soft?  
Is he resolute all down the line?  
Is every issue black or white?  
Does what God says ever change his mind  
When the President talks to God?

When the President talks to God  
Does he fake that drawl or merely nod?  
Agree which convicts should be killed?  
Where prisons should be built and filled?  
Which voter fraud must be concealed  
When the President talks to God?

When the President talks to God  
I wonder which one plays the better cop  
We should find some jobs, the ghetto's broke  
No, they're lazy, George, I say we don't  
Just give 'em more liquor stores and dirty coke  
That's what God recommends

When the President talks to God  
Do they drink near-beer and go play golf  
While they pick which countries to invade  
Which Muslim souls still can be saved?  
I guess God just calls a spade a spade  
When the President talks to God

When the President talks to God  
Does he ever think that maybe he's not?  
That the voice is just inside his head  
When he kneels next to the presidential bed  
Does he ever smell his own bullshit  
When the President talks to God?

I doubt it

I doubt it

~CONOR OBERST ('BRIGHT EYES')

## TAKE HIM OUT OF THE BALL GAME

White, greased face  
draped in red, white, and fool,  
Six hundred dollar seat has yankee dandy,  
Mr. Doodle  
He knows RBIs and ERAs, and spits peanuts  
cuz he's cool  
Doodle is a patriot should anybody doubt.  
Drinks iced Bud Lite,  
hates the Red Sox as a rule  
Course Doodle Junior's in Baghdad  
wearing borrowed Kevlar and driving a truck  
Yesterday he killed a young looter carrying a wooden stool.

It was a shame

Doodle doesn't vote or read the evening press  
Earns minimum wage at the neighborhood pool  
Doodle wants to retire before he's seventy-five  
But a patriot like Doodle is too valuable a tool.

~NANCY HOFFMAN

## THE FLAG FLAP

Some raise the flag, salute and pledge;  
Pretend symbol is solution  
To problems posed by patriots.  
I hold up the Constitution;  
Not symbol, but document and law,  
Propose the waivers waiver not.  
Uphold the words (the fatal flaw),  
The purpose purposely forgot.

~LARRY BARROWS

## CALL THE HOUR

It's the last night of July,  
9 p.m., the sun almost gone from sight  
closing out high summer  
the air clear as water,

and nine strong bells from City Hall  
call the hour; this hour when  
sky will blacken and offer  
stars and a white moon. Violet is

the air's color now, a deepening  
purple lastlight caught with the bells  
in swaying uppermost branches of elms,  
all a glory and clamor

of change stirring  
in the windy bowl of high branches,  
in the black leaves, a new darkening,  
insight, revolution

~CYNTHIA HOYT