

The Poets Speak

Desiring peace inspires verse.

It's been said that in time of war, there's no holding back the poets. Copper Canyon Press (Port Townsend, Wash.) founder and poet Sam Hamill was invited to the White House for a poetry symposium in January. To celebrate his invitation, Hamill e-mailed 50 people asking for anti-war poems to send to the First Lady. He received 1,500 responses in four days.

"I didn't know there were 1,500 poets in America," Hamill told the *New York Times*.

In response to Hamill's poetic peace protest, Laura Bush canceled the symposium. Her press secretary explained to the *NYT* that while the First Lady believes in the right of all Americans to express their opinions, "She, too, has opinions and believes that it would be inappropriate to turn what is intended to be a literary event into a political forum."

The symposium was intended to honor the writings of Emily Dickinson, Langston Hughes and Walt Whitman.

For two weeks in March, we ran a blurb in the "opportunities" section of our calendar asking for submissions of anti-war poetry. The submissions were not paid for. We heard from local poets whose works of art are inspired by deep feelings and the desire for peace.

In honor of National Poetry Month, we give voice to our readers and dedicate this space to all who know the pen is mightier. To read all the submissions that were e-mailed to us, log onto www.eugeneweekly.com

Please check the calendar for ongoing poetry events throughout the month of April.

—Aria Seligmann



Lady Liberty
by Marietta Bonaventure

*"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless,
tempest-tossed to me. I lift my lamp beside the golden door."*
— Inscription on the Statue of Liberty, New York City, NY, USA —

Pack up the statue of liberty & ship her back to France.
The days of the huddled masses are over.
We are assuming our place as Super-Power
and redefining our National consciousness accordingly.
You see, we don't have time for the huddled masses anymore.

The horrors of history are about to be revisited.
Small pox blankets are out of the closet.
The pinchers are in the fire for the new Inquisition.
The scent of burning flesh is once again on the breeze
And the conqueror's whip is raised to assure that
The grind of colonialism never EVER grinds to a halt.

genocide
witch hunts
holy war

Holy shit! I guess we didn't learn anything from history,
Because here we are, bound to repeat it.
But bigger & better than before!
Believe it.

So tell her to get packing
We don't need her looking over our shoulder
Breathing down our neck
Acting all high & mighty
When you know she's just a throw-back to another time
Nowadays she's a symbol whose meaning has been bled dry.

Nowadays liberty is overrated anyway
The freedom of today is access to a Visa Gold Card
Want to see an uprising?

Barricade the parking lot of Walmart
Jam the television receivers of the nation
Fly overhead dropping pamphlets of REAL INFORMATION
Commercial free.
Let it fall like confetti
Like ticker tape
And people will pour out into the streets for the parade.
You see, in the New America
The golden lamp beside the door
Casts not the glow of freedom
It's just the buzzing neon of the golden arches.

Our cultural umbilical cord no longer pulses with revolution.
We are now plugged directly into direct TV
Mainlined
Watching watching
And we've been watching so long, it's impossible
To tear our eyes away now.

We are the huddled masses,
Huddled in front of the flickering light of our television screens.
Minds open like sponges to whatever
They want us to buy, believe, die for.

So yeah, send her packing.
She's blocking the view
And her golden lamp
Is throwing too much light
Into the corners of our conscience.
We have turned our backs on history
and no word from our sponsor will save us now.

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