Red Lake

When bullets sink into the flesh
of children,
color still matters.

After
Columbine,
left tattered
white middle class dreams
of immunity,
parents across this country
grieved en masse,
blood pumped faster
in the crisp white shirts
of politicians,
and flag-waving citizens of every ilk
mourned and rallied
for change.

Columbine.
Melancholy ballad
Oh Columbinus,
in old school Latin
you are the flower dove.
Columba
turned hawk
gun-beaks and black flak jackets.
Your name
beneath full page photo spreads;
a chant
metaphor
purple call for change:
Columbine.
But even death
has a pecking order.
And the president
of a nation built
on soil soaked
with the blood of conquest
hesitates when he speaks
of sympathy
for the hapless young
who died in this
a reservation tragedy.

Add these children
to the anonymous
red dead of the Native Nations
of this America.
A twenty-first century America
who cannot waste its breath
to chant
the funeral song
for these fallen.
An America
who speaks this name
Red Lake
like an ethnic slur.

Red Lake.
Nagamon,
Red Lake.
Red Lake.
Mikwendum,
Red Lake.