

WHEREAS I query my uneasiness with the statement, “Native Peoples are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, and among those are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” I shift in my seat a needle in my back. Though “unalienable,” they’re rights I cannot legally claim if placed within a Whereas Statement. Meaning whatever comes after the word “Whereas” and before the semicolon in a Congressional document falls short of legal grounds, is never cause to sue the Government, the Government’s courts say. Whereas I remember that abstractions such as “life,” “liberty,” and “happiness” rarely serve a poem, so I have learned it best not to engage these terms anyway. Yet I smash head-on into this specific differentiation: *the* Creator vs. *their* Creator. Whereas this alters my concern entirely—how do I language a collision arrived at through separation?

When in doubt I’m told, write what I know. So I peel my eye to the moment, my love of it. I wake from a dream about running I interpret as the desire to get there. Pulling back my bed sheets, I teeter down the hall to the face of a new clock in the bathroom mirror. I say, *You’re old enough now to look at yourself full-on.* Whereas I set aside interrogation to see that

I cannot

syntax or poem the Creator nor differentiate one Creator from another Creator, much less. That is, mine from theirs, theirs from ours, or why a Creator-split. At the mirror, who can;

WHEREAS *re-*  
*solution's* an act  
of analyzing and re-  
structuring complex  
ideas into simpler  
ones so I place  
a black bracket  
on either side of  
an [idea] I cordon it  
to safety away  
from national re-  
solution the threat  
of re-  
ductive  
[thinking]:

Whereas Native Peoples are [ ] people with a deep and abiding [ ] in the [ ], and for millennia Native Peoples have maintained a powerful [ ] connection to this land, as evidenced by their [ ] and legends;

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Whereas the Federal Government condemned the [ ], [ ], and [ ] of Native Peoples and endeavored to assimilate them by such policies as the redistribution of land under the Act of February 8, 1887 (25 U.S.C. 331; 24 Stat. 388, chapter 119) (commonly known as the "General Allotment Act"), and the forcible removal of Native [ ] from their [ ] to faraway boarding schools where their Native [ ] and [ ] were degraded and forbidden;



WHEREAS I read an article in the *New York Times* about the federal sequestration of funds from reservation programs, the cuts. In federal promises and treaties. The article details living conditions on reservations a suicide rate ten times higher than the rest of the country. Therein the story of a twelve-year-old girl whose mother died, she doesn't know her father, she bounces home to home to foster home, weary. I regard how plainly the writer imparts her repeated sexual abuse. For mental care, unavailable services. There's a clinic that doesn't have money after May, *don't get sick after May* is the important message. As I read I cry, I always cry, and here I must be clear my crying doesn't indicate sadness. Then I read a comment posted below the on-line article:

*I am a fourteen-year-old girl who recently visited the \_\_\_\_\_ Reservation in South Dakota, with my youth group. The conditions the Native American people were living in were shocking. When I arrived home, I wrote a petition on whitehouse.gov for the US to formally apologize and pay reparations to the Native American people. This petition only stays up until July 23rd, so please sign and share!!! You signing it would really mean a lot to a lot of people. Thank you.*

Dear Fourteen-Year-Old Girl, I want to write. The government has already "formally apologized" to Native American people on behalf of the plural *you*, your youth group, your mother and father, your best friends and their families. *You*, as in all American citizens. *You* didn't know that, I know. Yet indeed, Dear Girl, the conditions on reservations have changed since the Apology. Meaning, the Apology has been followed by budget sequestration. In common terms sequestration is removal banishment or exile. In law-speak it means seizure for safe-keeping but changed in federal budgeting to mean subject to cuts, best as I can understand it. Dear Girl, I went to the Indian Health Services to fix a tooth, a complicated pain. Indian health care is guaranteed by treaty but at the clinic limited funds don't allow treatment beyond a filling. The solution offered: *Pull it*. Under pliers masks and clinical lights, a tooth that could've been saved was placed in my palm to hold after sequestration. Dear Girl, I honor your response and action, I do. Yet the root of reparation is repair. My tooth will not grow back. The root, gone.

[spiritual]

[belief]

[Creator]

[spiritual]

[customs]

[traditions]

[beliefs]

[customs]

[children]

[families]

[practices]

[languages]