

The Last Story

And so the time comes when all the people of the earth

can bring their gifts to the fire
and look into each other's faces
unafraid

Breathe deep

Feel the sacred well that is your own breath, and look
look at that circle

See us come from every direction
from the quarters of the earth

See the lines that stretch to the horizon
the procession, the gifts borne
see us feed the fire

Feel the earth's life renewed

And the circle is complete again
and the medicine wheel is formed anew
and the knowledge within each one of us made
whole

Feel the great turning, feel the change
the new life runs through your blood like fire
and all of nature rises with it
greening, burgeoning, bursting into flower

At the mighty rising
do the vines rise up, do the grains rise up
and the desert turns green
the wasteland blooms like a garden

Hear the earth sing
of her own loveliness
her hillock lands, her valleys
her furrows well-watered
her untamed wild places

She arises in you
as you in her

Your voice becomes her voice

Sing!
Your dance is her dance
of the circling stars
and the ever-renewing flame

As your labor has become her labor

Out of the bone, ash
Out of the ash, pain
Out of the pain, the swelling
Out of the swelling, the opening
Out of the opening, the labor

Out of the labor, the birth

Out of the birth, the turning wheel
the turning tide

This is the story we like to tell ourselves
In the night

When the labor is too hard, and goes too long
When the fire seems nothing but dying embers
winking out

We say we remember
a time when we were free

We say
that we are free, still, and always

And the pain we feel
is that pain of labor

And the cries we hear
are those of birth

And so you come to the fire
where the old ones sit

You are young
just on the edge of ripening

They are ancient
their faces lined
with spiderwebs of wrinkle

Their faces brown, bronze, cream, black
their eyes are wells of memory

They say
Listen child
For this is your night of passage
And it is time to learn
Your history
Tonight you will run free, out into the wild
Fearing only the spirit of your own power
And no one in this world would harm you
or lay a hand on you

But there was a time
When children were not safe
And the dark held rape and death and terror
We remember that time

You are growing
Already you know joy in your own body
Soon you will know joy in another
And whoever you choose to love
We will all be glad for your happiness

But there was a time when people were not free to love

And suffered pain and shame and loneliness

We remember that time

Go to the stream, kneel down, drink the sweet water

As you can anywhere water runs in this world

For it runs clean, and breathe the clean air

And know that there was a time

When waters and the vary air itself

Were poisoned, and the people died

We remember that time

Look around the circle, look at our faces

Each one different, each special

And we so love the hue of our different skins

And the carved planes of our faces

And our beautiful hair, like moss, like water

But there was a time

When people feared each other

And hated what they saw in different eyes

We remember that time

And look up into the sky, see the stars, see the moon

Know that there is nothing in the sky

To threaten or harm you

But there was a time

When we were all targets

And we didn't know, from one day to the next

When the bombs might come

Whether we would have a world to leave you

We remember that time

They are silent

They wait

You look into their eyes, you breathe deep

and it's as if you knew the world they speak about

You feel its fear seep into your blood

One last thing. I'd like to end by reviving a slogan from the 60s. I think it was first used by Huey P. Newton and Bobbie Seales of the Black Panther Party. This slogan can become our rallying cry and a constant reminder of where political power really lies. It's "All power to the people," and your response is "Power to the people." Let's do it three times. Stand up if you like:

All power to the people.

All power to the people. (this time like you mean it.)

All power to the people.

Right on!

and you feel also something else
a memory of strength, of courage

Look at the old ones

See the power in those old eyes and frail, cupped hands

Breathe it in

Know it is your own power, too

You are of them

They live in you as you in them

and you marvel at them

How did they survive? How did they stand it?

They wait

You realize they are waiting for you

and you wonder what it is they want you to do

And you think maybe they want you to ask them something

So, you say

Tell me, old ones

How did you do it?

How did you change it?

And they smile

Listen

Hear what they say to you

We struggled

We held out our hands and touched each other

We remembered to laugh

We went to endless meetings

We said no

We put our bodies on the line

We said yes

We invented, we created

We walked straight through our fears

We formed the circle

We danced

We spoke the truth

We dared to live it