

## We are Thankful for This Land, for These People

We are thankful, *okla-humma*, for *this land* which sustains us.

for cold-spring creeks on a hundred-degree day  
for the Crosstimbers, for its blackjack oaks  
and the brilliant palette of a summer prairie  
for visions of black cattle on green wheat  
and the sweet smell of fresh-cut alfalfa  
for gangly dappled colts frolicking in a field

for glint of Glass Mountains at sunrise  
for the Milky Way illuminating Black Mesa  
for Little Sahara and the Great Salt Plains  
for a flash of rain on a cloudless day  
for *frisson* of lightning and hours of thunder  
for the sharp blue arc of the summer sky

Thank you, *okla-humma* for our companions in *this land*.

for fireflies, horny toads, and walking-sticks  
for redbuds and sand plums in glorious bloom  
for lime-green horse-apples fallen from bois d'arc  
for terrapins and tarantulas crossing the road  
for paddlefish, bass, bluegill and crappie  
for the slap of beaver's tail echoing upstream

for the return of mountain lion and bear  
for pronghorn, bighorn, deer, and buffalo  
for a choir of coyotes singing a plains lullaby  
for redtail hawks soaring on thermals  
for scissortails, harbingers of spring  
for the mockingbird who sings all night

We are thankful, *okla-humma*, for our *cultures* and *peoples*

for barbeque and biscuits and buttermilk pie  
for onion burgers and wild grape dumplings  
for Braum's ice cream on the Fourth of July  
for bánh mì, tamales, cabbage rolls, pepperpot  
for the best fried chicken in the world  
found at Eischen's in Okarche, Oklahoma

for thirty-nine tribes and the wisdom they share  
for the sturdy folks who fought the dust bowl  
for those who hit the road and for those who stayed  
for our stubborn refusal to give up or give in

for those who resist—Karen Silkwood,  
Clara Luper, Chitto Harjo, and more.

for those who ran toward a bombed building  
and those who carried the injured and dying  
for church pews transformed into hospital beds  
for courageous and heartbroken first responders  
for dedicated searchers, for their valiant dogs  
for families who held their breath between prayers

for a broad elm tree and black marble gates  
for clocks set at 9:01 a.m. and 168 sunlit chairs

for those who holler, “tell your momma I said hey”  
for Okies in trucks navigating worn country roads  
who greet all with a nod or a wave as they pass by  
for those who pull over for funerals and ambulances  
and those who bring casseroles to grieving families  
and those who stop to help when your car breaks down

for those who warn us to take shelter from the storm  
for the after-tornado swarm of neighborly strangers  
who do what needs doing, expecting nothing in return  
for the ones who give near-strangers a 50-mile ride  
to closest hospital, then stay by their bedside all day  
for those who smell of oil, of diesel, of dirt, of sweat

for our plenitude of poets, for actors and filmmakers  
for the Five Moons ballerinas and for fancy-dancers  
for the Kiowa Five artists and for printmakers  
for beadworkers and quilters, muralists and potters  
for musicians and songwriters, for blues and country  
for gospel tunes and hymns arising in joyful harmony

for the way we have begun to confront  
our predecessors’ failures—land theft,  
the Tulsa massacre, the night-riding  
the lynchings of Blacks and Indians  
and socialists and labor organizers  
for our desire to embrace one another

*Yakoke okla-humma, Šukran.*  
*Way-wee-nah. Cảm ơn bạn.*  
*Gracias. Mési. Kòmṣool.*  
*Aho. Mvto. Wado. Ƙra.*

We are thankful for *okla-humma*, for *our* people, for *this land*.

