

Alameda in the Time of the Great Turning

Ohlone land of the Muwekma tribe
island of oak and redwood, sacred soil,
navy base and Gold Coast playground
Island of families, babies, beaches and barbecues
Island of egrets, pelicans, dowagers, terns
Island of crow and mourning dove

In this time of smoke, plague and rage
our quiet, tree-lined streets simmer and wait
Each moment multiplies
spirals into a future
we cannot know
Here at the pivot point
we hold our breath
and wait with faith
with trepidation
together

Alameda
Ohlone land of the Muwekma tribe
and Chochenyo tongue
may we heed the posture and prayer
of those who came before
and emulate their light tread
upon this land of plenty:
shad, stickleback, coho, goby
pipefish, sculpin, flounder, perch
coyote, mountain lion, gray fox, raccoon
ground squirrel, cottontail, opossum, deer

It is in this moment we decide:
do we make homes for the homeless
or let them languish beneath freeway underpasses?
do we care for our anguished and despairing
or stare from Crown Beach as they drown before us?
or let them suicide in a storage room
when they can no longer afford the rent?
do we send crisis workers to
assess reports of erratic behavior or
a 'strangely' dancing man of color
or send police to strongarm the situation?
Do we nourish the land or continue to exploit her?
Do we explore and support our plurality of color and culture
or grasp at the scraps of a failed ideology?
It is in this moment
we choose
who we want
to become

Alameda
Ohlone land of the Muwekma tribe
and long gone oak forest
we rest on your sands and mounds
we ask for the wisdom to hold
the land and its creatures
in equal esteem
to abolish our fear
of one another
that we may tread this path
in community
as relations
together