



## Hybridity & Diasporic Writing

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This piece is intended as a collection of experiences, images, words, and re-membrances connected to being and becoming Indigenous. As a mixed-race Black Indigenous woman in exile, I story in thinking about Black and Native relations in the Americas, local and diasporic. I speak, too, about water, keepers of water and drowning. I have dreamt my mother resurfacing from underneath turquoise salt only to be dragged down again. There doesn't seem to be any logical or reasoned place to start, other than where I am, which becomes the beginning. In being and becoming Indigenous, living and embodying re-surgence, re-membling and re-storying, the ongoing conversations with my mother, ones I could only have with her after her death, are barometer and compendium. Only in the journey back is there any coherence in the *whatcomesnext* to the work of living into the story without shame, so that I can continue to tell it; so that others like me can tell their own. I am concerned with what sparks the debate about who is Indigenous, to which place, belonging, and then, nationhood. There's no accident to the realization that the more I learn about being and becoming Indigenous, the more I realize how little I know. The discourse of extinction is insidious, powerful, and thriving. It's an ironic position to be, in-between, when who you are is so intimately involved with what you do.

I find a requirement of this work is suspending the need to be certain, paradoxical in a world of scholarly theorizing and supported statements. Indigenous scholars/tellers, are expected, in academe, to back it up, explain our perceptions, theories and conclusions. Indigenous Methodologies re-story our intuitions. Still we fight the perception that these same knowings, ineffable and refusing quantification, are wannabe reconstructions of a disappeared past. I have always been interested in untold stories and entirely alienable hidden truths.

The wind is howling outside. I have to struggle with it to remember. Moments ago the thought was at my fingertips, waiting for the page. Erased before it found breath. Absence is prevalent in this work, a function of existing on the peripheries of essentialized understandings of land, place, nation, Indigeneity, and Blackness, A feature of in-between that is wholly here and *justwhoIamnow*. My mother was the truth-teller in our family. She hinted at painful secrets, talked about obscured origins, left out the details. My thoughts and ancestral connections are scattered across continents and generations. I collect these stories, here, to reach back into a *tribalography* (Howe 2002, 29). Mothers' re-search has become so much more than an analysis of today and what we read of how we got here, rather it's a re-construction, feminist, Indigenous, mine, ours. In the process of navigating what is understood as Creole Indigeneity my stories pay attention to how being and becoming catch us up in our own webs, ogre-faced spiders waiting to drop an inextricable weaving on the unsuspecting, each other.

### Works Cited

Howe, LeAnne. "The Story of America: A Tribalography." In *Clearing a Path: Theorizing the Past in Native American Studies*. Nancy Shoemaker, Ed. New York: Routledge, 2002.

## THE ROAD TO LETTING GO

when i first lit the sweetgrass i was lazy  
smudge bowl littered with leftover prayers and whispered conversations  
matches and ash  
it's cold outside can't see the base of the tree cushioning my falls from grace  
briefly smoking ceremony protests reticence  
begin anew speaks the wind in a language i do not remember

what to keep what to throw away strategic decisions made in ship holds  
cast aside decolonizing moves that pimp peoples in fetishized re-collections of  
desires re-settle re-inhabit re-package re-move  
traces of indigeneousness the only good indian  
dis-appear in homo-gene-eye-ity my self  
determination dis-engages with piecemeal cobbling of methodologies and alliances creeping up on  
you in a rhetoric of in-collusion  
give back my belief in this waste-land along with that moral rectitude  
in my hunger for the past i encounter my ancestors they name me stranger

decolonizing is an English word  
inextricable bonds between means and ends ask me  
when have i ever felt safe  
implications of both question and answer bear the stickiness of  
my insides draped across my head and through my hair  
how will we recognize ourselves in this garb who will we become spitting  
images of forced negotiations questioning the imposition of  
colonial histories on our communities

my mother's specter rises from the ocean springing forth in a spray of turquoise and salt, eyes open.  
she is talking to me though i can't hear her she is frustrated she can't get my attention it's important  
why was i never a listener? i hear her voice calling me from the nether parts of the house when i am  
alone chaudy cha-u-ddddy y chaaaaaaudy yyy shoddy

makeshift booty refusing to stay buried bodies  
hefted overboard into  
the channel  
can it be about mothers and not mothering  
this taking apart of the pieces of my soul repair them make them  
whole living into the story  
is this how i am to remember  
bridges scare me clench teeth squeeze eyes shut  
unnatural seeing spirit  
called to meet when we listen to you  
my voice is not always my own

# WHERE DO I BEGIN

miscegenated into dominance  
creolized  
touristified  
craving childhood reminiscence  
glue repels  
worn out  
even my own veins are anathema  
they itch on the inside  
i can see them stretched out over continents and honeycomb rock  
beach. ocean. building.  
limestone stair  
draped  
pulsing over canopy beds and louvered windows  
in their imaginary absence i feel the ache  
nostalgic of a lost limb  
i want to toy with  
the stump of my identity before i am snuffed out  
whoooooooooshhhhhh  
into extinction  
recognition and repair for stitched arteries leak into the in between

time space place  
mothers' land-ed periwinkle ackee johnny cake  
flickering across world views  
is a wake  
for my grandmothers  
they come  
when I call  
nighttime vigil for my child wrapped in bright made from anguish  
transmuted hatreds  
bred into coffee  
cream  
set aside the gin  
in a heartbeat  
burn for spirit  
breathe for mothers  
is there another story for me in there?  
sick handed down  
healing policing ourselves so industrious we are relieved  
even of our own agency  
tired  
I ride bitch alongside my own freedom *wordsajumbleofprogress* in my  
mouth teeth unbound i come to meltdown  
silver shackles  
molten anger and memory  
I want  
those trees and degrees very badly  
discovered  
bags of Bacardi caps and beetle runs no exception  
to the craving that has powe-red  
this reconstruction resurgence becoming  
i don't need you  
to tell me this is my  
inheritance  
i recognize it on the death certificate

floating  
i have never lived  
Arawak Pequot Taino Creek Seminole ways spinning  
through blue holes *lickuhduhtarbrusssssh*  
waiting under water eyes open  
sucker  
fish hitches onto my hips i don't see  
the barracuda  
until  
the only recourse is to  
scamper leaping snagged propellor  
bleeds diluted ancestry into salt  
uncle not my uncle spear his only companion *down down down* no  
breath  
dancing with our mother for dinner  
trailing fingers in night sea skimmed by hungry mouths  
yellowtail come up  
half  
gone disappeared by the tickle beneath my fingers over gunwales  
rocked by waves  
headless  
snatched back i cradle what's left  
my cousin swims with sharks  
guffaws at my foreign sensibilities  
settles



almost went back but for intergenerational manference  
*hisfatherandmymother* gave a whole new meaning to us  
*callineachudduhsistabruddah*  
love  
affairs marred by cockroaches and vegas showgirls widely available  
blackness  
be-come home legacy insufficient to repatriate  
me singlehandedly i caught tossed fruit drove drunken revels home to  
gunpoint  
encounters  
under lamplight and thought this was ancestral  
practice well  
by that time  
that's what we had left

my mother capers beneath liquid  
merciless thieves of our children's bones  
you can drink these finite ripples in a land where i keep  
dogs' and white folks' secrets  
swallow the lost  
escapees diasporic neocolonial self-mutilating  
nation states hand over heart we are all  
punishing each other believe it  
is a form of love  
will my hands cramp with arthritis jagged with dysplasia tongue twisted  
with acculturation and appropriation  
soaked in an inland sea of lies  
genetically marked into authenticity on landscapes of souls spill that  
milk don't touch  
each other love each other know each other  
sever *rightfromthegetgo*  
filth  
reprobates  
ancestry to cut your teeth on  
my  
that looks lovely  
better

i watched that bird flip broken wing longer than i could bear  
couldn't leave it  
couldn't help it  
called in a rescuer  
provided a box  
cold as shit why daydream about faraway folks who look like me smell  
like me  
*come on*  
brown emergent from purulent chrysalis no iridescence here  
it's a bat  
looks like a moth  
excruciating stretching wet  
wings spitted roasting someone *lickitup*  
there's a piece stuck  
between  
your teeth

eyes close  
hold my belly  
trees fall spirit walkers culled not indigenous  
to  
this  
land

decisions made by creole bankers developers citizens  
related to me by choices some others made now  
i understand what she meant  
said she came to realize she lives in a black country  
home not her own since she don't belong  
the way they say we ought to since she won't crawl  
into the skin they've stretched out for us  
a moulted remnant of my-the-ological proportions  
can i get an amen



CHARLOTTE HENAY is a mother, teacher, writer, storyteller and researcher. She works to counter Indigenous extinction myths through storywork and lyric scholarship, Indigenous methodologies, and re-membering. Charlotte writes about cultural memory and grandmothers' gardens as an activist for (de)colonial, Indigenous, and Afro-futurities. She has a background in critical race theory, education administration, and teaching. Charlotte's visual art work has been shown at York University's Crossroads Gallery and 416 Gallery for MIXEDArtTO. She received her M.Ed in Sociology and Equity in Education from OISE/University of Toronto. Charlotte has been an administrator and consultant in First Nations, mainstream and international education contexts, and is currently a Ph.D. student at York University in Language, Culture and Teaching.