

Centuries of Sorrow

I remember growing up in Iowa
without the Sioux and Dakota
whom we vanquished,
This was their land. Our high school
mascot was a mighty Indian.

I remember learning about plantation slaves
but Mr. Lubach didn't tell us about rape
by the master, lynchings in the town square,
the auction block, and hunger.
We named our beloved black lab Niggie.

I remember dad and mom whispering about Hitler,
Dachau and Auschwitz as smoke from their stacks
drifted across Europe, blanketing the complicity
of Germany's Christian churches and their leaders.

I remember the Navy stationed me in Mississippi
in 1967 and during my first week, two synagogues
burned to the ground. White Only signs in
Wideman's Restaurant, biracial Navy couple's
home burned, white schools, black schools,
white churches, black churches, Klan rallies.

Today, Native Americans occupy reservations,
white knees choke black necks, mass incarceration
of black teens and profiling dominate injustice,
Latinos face The Wall, immigrants stranded
and separated from their weeping children, mosques burn,
and antisemitism and Muslim phobia blare and echo.

Sadly, I remember I am a privileged white man.