

ON THE FRONT LINES: Detached voice Example

Five Gestures for Freedom

Friday, September 1, 1967

Arms locked to step into street.
Arms over head, protection against billy clubs.
Hands to face cupped around mouth
 doubled over, retching. Tear gas.
Elbows up, angled out, pulled into arrest.
Arms behind back, wrists caught in handcuffs.

--Margaret Rozga in *Holding My Selves Together: New & Selected Poems*
Originally published in *200 Nights and One Day*

ON THE FRONT LINES: Embedded Example

Peggy: Crossing the 16th Street Viaduct

August 28, 1967

16th Street? No big deal.
In high school after football
or basketball games, we'd go to Pepi's.
Great pizza. We'd always find friends there.

Yet I couldn't be sure.
This was not high school, and I had new friends.
We marched past Pepi's.

I looked at the expanse of window.
I touched the glass. It was cool and smooth.
No one stood in this doorway.
No one glared at us through these windows.

I thought, it's okay. I know this place.
I'll be all right. We'll be all right.

I didn't look at the Crazy Jim's crowd. Too scary.
Up ahead was a stretch with fewer people.
When we get there, I thought, we'll be okay.

But something changed.
I felt like I had been in a tunnel
and was emerging into noise
like the noise of a crowd at a football game,
the noise of the home team's fans, and you're the visitor.

No. Listen. That's not it, not even close.
It's something deeper—
a wave of hate,
the sound of hate, blurring individual words.

We turned onto Lincoln Avenue,
the crowds thickening again. I couldn't ignore it anymore—
the blunt force of hate finding a rhyme and a rhythm:

I don't want a ...jig... next door. Keep them in the inner core.

At Kosciusko Park, we huddled around picnic tables,
keeping very close, to be able to hear.
Some man, called himself district park supervisor,
said we couldn't give speeches.
A picnic permit, he shouted,
a picnic permit does not permit speeches.
We prayed, for peace, for justice, Father Groppi leading us.
Then back up Lincoln Avenue,
sometimes almost running.
Police, night sticks angled up across their chests,
sometimes pushed back on people,
people trying to get at us.

The crowd noise was like a dome
enclosing us, the whole dome moving
rapidly down the street. My face was wet.
With sweat. I was not crying.

How had I walked these streets for years
and never seen the ugly?

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