

Shaina A. Nez

Memories of Allegiance

Kéyah ‘ashdladiingo bił háhoodzooígíí Bidahnaat’a’í
shił niljigo biniinaa bich’j ‘ádishní Háálá ‘ájooba’ dóó
sih hasin yee hadít’é I pronounce in clean dialect
Shinalí’s spectacles beam a smile creases up
insisting I say more I stand up front in the living
room Goldberg runs in a nun outfit on television the
sound muted all eyes on me Reciting the pledge of
allegiance in Diné bizaad was the first time I ever felt
whole alive for once my nalí understood me I
made them proud there was hope for me no one said
our language emphasizes abundance much more than
the United States can afford much more than
war language much more than our recognition
Twenty-seven years ago on September 11th we
welcomed our cousin sister into the world Twenty-
seven years ago we were not in war Twenty-seven
years ago Bill Clinton was sworn in for a second term
Twenty-seven years ago I bounced a basketball into the
red earth running leaving footprints of my presence
gracing the blue hour Twenty-seven years ago war
lingered waiting for the next frontier

Kéyah t’áá si’áá ñt’ée’ ‘Áłáá’ Dine’é yee
‘ahéedahodíłzin Binahjí k’é ‘ajooba’ bidziilii bee
da’ahííniíta’ this last line lingers in the dormitory
living room all elementary classes gather sitting side
by side we watch the news repeating images of a plane
crashing into the Twin Towers in basketball twin
sisters tower over the paint stopping all who dare
cross them the coach calls them the twin towers but I
never understood what it meant shoulders ache from
playing a vicious round of Rez ball some girls have
vendettas and we settle this on the court bodies
colliding knees scraping pavement hands and
elbows protecting the ball swinging one elbow
toward the gut letting your opponent know you stand
on business competition when the dormitory staff
and teachers whisper they talk about war war
between countries war already waged war
bringing back grief war is competition a one-sided
transaction are we the girls at war?

Danielle Shandiin Emerson

Shí łeeshch’iih béénáshniih, I remember ash

łeeshch’iih
across shitáá’
on the inside
of shilátsíín
from the
beesh bii’ ko’í
in the corner
of the
hogan.
My cousins
stand next
to me,
nicknamed Baby
& Chunky
due to their
stature.
We stand
still as
you smear
bilátsoh
from left
to right.
From
left to right.
From left to
right.

The light carves shadows in your face. Dying embers see
new life, lived protection. Your tongue dispels nightmares,
we stand on cold tile, barefoot—listening to you speak
Diné bizaad, a prayer we recognize but can’t translate,
because bilagááná bizaad loves to loot Nitsáhákees.
Wringing adáyi’ till glottal stops & slashed l’s
brawl, the teachings our masaní dóó amá spent lives
passing on to their alchini, confronting the
importance of a “good education.”
I wish I learned the prayer you said that night, when
I woke crying & your warm hands spread warmer
łeeshch’iih on my skin & I could finally
breathe through my nose.
We started another fire & sat watching the glass
glow orange. Shímasaní returned to bed & we finally slept.
“Ałhosh, shiyazh.”