

Living Nations, Living Words: A Map of First Peoples Poetry
Poem commentary by Natalie Diaz, 2020

Speaker: Natalie Diaz

Date of recording: August 4, 2020

Location: Mohave Valley, Arizona, poet's home

Length: 4 minutes, 25 seconds

START OF RECORDING

Natalie Diaz: I'm Natalie Diaz and I'm reading "Postcolonial Love Poem."

[Natalie Diaz reads "Postcolonial Love Poem"]

ND: "Postcolonial Love Poem" is a poem that I imagine taking place in my desert—where I was raised, where I learned to speak and to imagine.

A question that I am asking a lot lately, including in this poem, is what does it mean to have been born and raised and lived on a reservation, knowing what reservations were intended to do? The conditions they were meant to create and eventually terminate? Yes, I know what my country has done to me and my people. I know what it continues to do.

And there is also a way that I am determined to continue to exist as my creator imagined me to be when they made me. I am allowing the desert to become a place of desire because I know the ways that we think about the desert, and I know the ways that my country has thought about indigenous peoples.

I very intentionally paired the desert with the idea of desire. People think of the desert as being a place void of life or a very stark place—a very violent place. And it can be those things. The desert is also a place of abundance. It's also a place that is very intentional with its energy and its life. The animals here know how to conserve energy; they know how to rest. The trees know how to store water; they know when to fruit.

There are a lot of origins or openings or first moments—beginnings—in the poem, which feel very important, very cyclical: to be able to rest or to break and yet to still "green." To still

bloom. To still return to life. To always have that possibility waiting.

END OF RECORDING