

SAN MATEO COUNTY POET LAUREATE



Poetry Reading *by*

San Mateo County Poet Laureate Caroline Goodwin

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About this poem:

There is nothing like a major storm to remind me of my mortality and my connection to the earth. I wanted this poem to inspire readers to think about how short life is, and also to keep thinking deeply about the power structures that exist, and what's going on in Ferguson and in Iguala, Mexico. (On September 26 of this year, 43 male student protesters from a rural teachers' college went missing in Iguala, Guerrero, Mexico. Human remains were discovered, resulting in 80 arrests. Investigations continue today.)

Also, I can never forget the death of James Byrd, Jr. in Jasper, Texas on June 7, 1998. Byrd was dragged by white supremacists for three miles behind a pick-up truck along an asphalt road.

I wanted my poem to provoke thought about the connections between environmental activism and social activism. For me, it begins partly with awareness and gratitude for the simple things like clean water and shelter. I am reminded of these simple things whenever there is a storm, and whenever I think about the difficult truth of our country's past and present trouble.

WHEN THE RAIN

Caroline Goodwin

when we watch over the beach

over the snowy plover

seeking shelter in the couch grass

when we hold our hands open

to the west and forget ourselves

in the narrow corridor in

filaments of sunlight that remain

when we detect the first

dry leaves along the pavement

scratching at our arms

and remember the blood

in ferguson in jasper in iguala

in our streets

when we pause when the trees

light up our living rooms with silver

tinsel and ornaments when we drink

the clear water the clean water

when the sky returns to its feathered

clouds and stillness and we come out

let us come out with our eyes open

and with our hearts prepared for both

the battle and the feast