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Selections of Poetry

Gregory J. Hobbs

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Selections of Poetry

SELECTIONS OF POETRY

JUSTICE GREGORY J. HOBBS, JR.

In Volume 3/Issue 2; Volume 5/Issue 2; Volume 7/Issue 2; Volume 9/Issue 2; Volume 11/Issue 2; Volume 13/Issue 1; Volume 14/Issue 2; Volume 15/Issue 2; Volume 16/Issue 2, Volume 18/Issue 1, we published selections of poems by Justice Hobbs. In the tradition of updates to previous publications, we hope you enjoy this additional selection.

TENT LIKE OPENINGS

Let the music in your judgments sing!

The rule of law is nothing but the song of human beings
raised in hopeful expectation of yearning for a place to

Nourish, grow, and cultivate each and every living thing.

A cup of water from the widow's well, a burning bush,
a father's knife, spared to save a darling son

His future husbandry.

When so much is given, holding to the world's rim
intonations of a cherished sister's richer resonance,

If not to ask, "Why does each and every day re-circulate?"
as if the day before we'd missed the cairn the breaking light

Sets upon the ripples of a lake.

BOLO TIE JUSTICE

The people of Colorado put us together

a person at a time to conference
and to stand for the rule of law

determined a case at a time,
reasoning and differing together

enjoying each other's company,

celebrating our western regalia.

Well worn together.

(for my dear colleagues, Nancy, Ben, Allison, Monica, Will, Brian, thank you
and may the court forever change, true and resonant)

ASK THE TOWERS

Why did the builders build you?

Because the bees led us to the water pockets
And raven played lookout over farmsteads,

See here! See here! He cried out loud,
Climb down! Climb down!

Taste the rain a cavern ceiling drips
with lightning from the sky

You can paint upon a water jar.

Every morning, every evening
Sleeping Man is with you,

In the slant the seasons make
and the Ancestors,

When it's time to plant
and time to harvest.

O, COLORADO!

Never so vibrant does our country seem
this first full week of the Solstice 2015,

Back and orange tail feathers streaming.

Never such a ruby-throated white-breasted,
green-backed purple sheen!

Stone cold ice balls give way to stars,
the bee homes to the blossom.

A torch is lit,

New ground is broken,

wild orchids hang in the air,

Charred forests are renewed,
all creatures live creation.

Sound the bell!
Each of us is loved greatly.

A SMALLER DOOR

Herod's Palace outside of Bethlehem.

He commanded wise men to return and tell him
where the child could be found.

Disappointed, he ordered the murder of every
newborn male Jewish child. Shepherds watched
over them,

Joseph packed them up and headed for Egypt.
The Holy Spirit guides wise man and women
away from Herod.

Many churches, like the Church of the Nativity,
are built on sacred ground. All ground is sacred

When one enters through a smaller door
in the company of others Mother and Child in
the place, they say, is the birthplace of this child

May as well be any place on Earth. Without
distinction, every person's birth and origin

Is endowed in grace with love.

PRAISE, PRAISE UNTO THE TURNING OF THE LIGHT

Go you now, serving simply well goodbye
Steady bright the many ways into night,
Praise, praise unto the turning of the light

As you festoon our window's living room
As limbs extend the arc of day's array,
Praise, praise unto the turning of the light

This bed of straw awaits the bearing gifts
Children bring tomorrow morning, singing,

Praise, praise unto the turning of the light

At Earth's opposite end Beagle Channel
Starts its summer breaking newer worlds in
Praise, praise unto the turning of the light

Remnant witness, testament towers stand
Gone and build we here, leave and yet abide
Praise, praise unto the turning of the light

And you, grandchildren, where so many be
Upon this mount been brought about, for love
Go you now, serving simply well goodbye
Praise, praise unto the turning of the light.

FOR A NEW YEAR

May we please bow our heads as we pray for our dear friend,
Diane Hoppe, Aspinnall Award winner who is in the hospital today,

As we gather today in each other's good company
to share the abundance of all gifts we receive,
this food we eat, this water we drink, this conversation
we generate through the labor and fruit
of the commitment of others.

May the story of our lives continue to invigorate the Colorado
we inherit, love, and bequeath. In the open space of
opportunity, may we learn to practice grace and respect,
with self-correcting wit and humility in our slips and falls,

Righting the wrongs we do unto others and celebrating
another chance to engage in what we may and what we will.

Lord, we thank you.

CENTENNIAL VILLAGE

February 1861 Colorado becomes a territory carved out of
Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico & Utah Territories

Taking in the Great Divide, the upper reaches of the Platte,
Republican, Arkansas, Rio Grande, and Colorado rivers.

A new President awaits his oath of office,
on account of him, the South secedes.

Free soil, anti-slavery Colorado lumbers into
sagebrush plain farms, villages, courthouses,

Lawyer Lincoln presiding.

Newly-married Leroy and Martha Carpenter
take up residence in the Union Colony

At the confluence of the Poudre and the Platte

Delph Carpenter, one of three boys, the one with the rakish curl closest to
his mother, is destined to become the architect of interstate river treaties.

He sleeps in the attic with his brothers, stokes a stove of ditches and
dreams. Beneath the spacious skies, row on row they rustle green.

Hair-woven family ties are coded into future generations.

ENCORE

Strider and I set out this morning of the 4th with a commission
to fetch a smidgen more of

Louisiana Purchase columbine for friends in Philadelphia
of the Declaration's proclaiming

She prefers nooks of filtered-light companionship
with ponderosa, aspen, Doug Fir

In the upper reaches of the Missouri Mississippi watershed
of the Hayman and Buffalo Creek Windy Peak burns

As if she were the quieter whirl of a hummingbird.

CROSSING THE BAR, YOUR SWEARING IN!

May it please the Court! Distinguished colleagues, family and friends. And
especially you, our newest Colorado-licensed attorneys.

Welcome! You are about to take the attorney's oath of this office. We call
upon you now to cross this Bar. For you it's a new morning, a new day as it is
for us.

To quote a poet of the common law tradition, Alfred Tennyson, "may there be
no moaning at the bar" as you put out to sea. In this "bourne of Time and
Place," you embark to "one clear call" which "drew" you "out the boundless
deep" and "turns again home."

You embark upon no solitary venture. Listen well as you and your fellow colleagues say this oath together. Take to heart each of its vows. Practice them through every new morning given you.

To quote a poet in our constitutional tradition of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, "Can't you hear the rooster crowing . . . underneath the bridge where the water flows . . . so happy to see you smile underneath the sky of blue . . . on this new morning with you." His parents named this Nobel Laureate Robert Allen Zimmerman.

Bob Dylan's Jewish paternal grandfather Zigman was born in Odessa, Ukraine, grew up in an atmosphere of virulent anti-Semitism, and fled with his wife Anna, whose family roots were originally in Turkey near the Armenian border, to Ellis Island in 1909, then to Minnesota.

Abraham Lincoln, another mid-westerner, hailed his ancestry from England, thence into Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois. As a one term Congressman from Illinois elected in 1846, he opposed the Mexican-American War for being an unjust slave-owner conspiracy fomented to add additional lands to the United States for the expansion of slavery.

His stance on the floor of Congress against President Polk's war was so unpopular he did not seek another term. His call to the summit of service came when the United States Supreme Court announced its 1857 Dredd Scott decision, holding slaves could never be free, could never be citizens, could be held in bondage anywhere within the Territories and States of the United States.

Orient yourself well to this place of your admission! Colorado became a Territory in February of 1861 shortly after Lincoln was elected President and the Southern States were leaving the Union. We became a State in 1876 during the presidency of Ulysses S. Grant.

The courtrooms of the Colorado Supreme Court and Court of Appeals are housed in the Ralph Carr Judicial Center along Lincoln Street across from the Capitol, anchored on a hill along Grant Street. The four pillars through which you enter the courthouse stand for the four pillars of the Rule of Law in Colorado and the United States. These are the Separation of Powers among the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial Branches of Government; Guaranteed Individual Rights; Due Process of Law; and Equal Protection of the Laws.

Two of these four pillars of the Rule of Law, due process and equal protection applied to state and local government statutes, rules, and ordinances, result from the Civil War Amendments to the United States Constitution.

Lawyer, constitutional scholar, witty and wise speaker and writer, Lincoln founded his unswerving devotion upon a Nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all persons are created equal. To us, to each and every generation of lawyers, citizens, and public officials he says: "It is for us the

living . . . to be dedicated . . . to the unfinished work” of justice.

Carved out of heart of the Great Divide as it runs through our State, Colorado comprises a legacy of Native American, Hispanic, and multi-immigrant vigor amongst a grand and vast landscape of plains, mountains, mesas, and canyons.

We share a common heritage forged from all too many common experiences. Despised, dismembered, exiled, enslaved, seeking refuge, protection, and fulfillment, each and all of us, created equal, seeking like treatment, “Liberty and Justice for All.”

This is the sacred promise of the Declaration of Independence written into the constitution as the result of the Rule of Law and inscribed at the pinnacle above the four pillars of the Ralph Carr courthouse, embraced and explained in the building’s Learning Center. As you enter through the four pillars, Martin Luther King’s ringing reminder appears directly in front of you: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

Welcome, you, our state and our nation’s newest lawyers! Justice is an incremental work in progress honed a decision at a time through exercise of the First Amendment. As you take your oath, please reflect upon the fundamentals of human experiences that bring you here to this day and hour forged into the genealogy of the Rule of Law’s DNA.

Take a look around you, please! Who do you share this promise with? We do not stand on the shoulders of giants. We stand among them. They helped get you here. You, in turn, will help others on. Practice well for each and every business or person who calls upon your counsel. Take pro bono cases for those who need you and lack financial means. Serve on boards and commissions, local units of government, the state and nation. Play your music, art, and intellect. Write, speak, exercise the dual lobes of your brain, the two chambers of your beating heart.

When you take the attorney’s oath of office, you swear to yourself and to the court you will step outside of yourself to walk in the shoes, the boots, the slippers, the moccasins, the loafers, the high heels, the tennis shoes, the ice skates of someone else’s no longer comfortable fit. You can feel the pinch of their desperation, bad deal, loss, victimization, crash or ambit of their fondest wish to leave something of their own to the future’s very next ancestors.

This oath of office you are about to take invites you to cross tribal boundaries within the jurisdiction of your mind and heart’s ability to feel and listen well, reason prudentially, give wise counsel freely to another tying the constraints of the law to its ever-creative possibility. In this, you will stir the leaven of your own legacy into good and edible fry bread.

I AM A CREATURE LIGHT

I'm a creature light upon the water.
I have the gift of wings, of winged companions notching the waters.

Some mornings, though, I feel I'm clutching for a foothold.

I want to tuck my head amongst my feathers and hold myself off.

That's when the ripples others make gather me up.

YESTERDAY EVENING

Yesterday evening we gathered with our Book Group to enjoy each other's company and discuss "Our Souls at Night" by Colorado author Kent Haruf.

This his final writing opens with "It was an evening in May just before full dark" and closes with "She could see her reflection in the glass. And the dark behind it."

Even as move, we gather each other. We elders bound together by who we are becoming.

No distance cannot be bridged. No loss cannot be re-gained. No belief worthy of being disregarded.

No partiality other than becoming part of a wider and more comprehensive opening into our souls at night.

AS FROM A CLOUD

And the Spirit came among them,
as from a cloud.

All understood one another,
through their tongues

Knew not the words many others
were pronouncing.

A gentle rain fell upon their beliefs,
forgiving them,

Lending them wings,
for each and every one of them

Had been fully conceived
from the inception of all creation.

WHICH DAYS?

When the sun starts moving
north again?

When you hear the whirring

Sandhills fly overhead?

When you say your story in a paper-
white flurry of intoxicating garlic?

When the wind shushes down at dusk
and you glimmer the evening star?

When you swirl within that river of stars
Circling round and round above your heads?

O, Today! (Bobbie and Greg)

COLORADO,

Your name above all
Mountains, mesas, plains

Where we've been
Where we're going
Where we are

Your waters flow.

ON OUR WAY WE ARE MARTIN LUTHER KING

There are mountains higher
than the Great Divide,

Wider than the widest seas,
we the people are passing through

We've been this way before

We were born to become
a more perfect Union,

Oppressed, reviled, deprived
depending on each other's will
To right love into the rule of law.

KINDS OF PROOF

Kinds of proofs more persuasive of character than admissible in a court of law.

Love of family.

Loyalty of friends.

Well-earned and affectionate allegiance in the work place.

Long drives up from the Valley and back again.

The giver's receiving line.

Every kind of growing thing.

Tug of a river dweller on your line.

UP THE SPINE

Do not doubt the curvature of your
backbone is up to the journey ahead

The contour of this land winds up
the artery of rivers

From both coasts.

Bird Woman in the lead
bride of a Frenchman

She carries her child on her back
bearing for the Bitterroots.

Shall we turn back now?