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Long Walk Back

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Long Walk Back

Fifty arrowheads for the States
for the Navajo Nation
blue yellow red

Three bands of the rainbow
at the circle's opening dwell the Diné
people of the sacred mountains

Hesperus and Blanca
San Francisco Peaks and Taylor
red rock heart of the Colorado Plateau

Conquered removed returned abiding
spiritual practical patriotic optimistic
creative citizens of clans chapters states

Nation within a nation celebrating
sovereignty in all its forms
enduring sense of American selves

Free and responsible communities
acknowledging and protecting
each other's existence.

LONG WALK BACK

Civil War is tearing ourselves apart
for belonging together

*In the year of 1868 by the Treaty of Fort Sumner
by adopting the 14th Amendment*

Peoples of the United States promise
to become two nations returned to their homeland

*This week friends will journey back
to their place of exile*

Founded as we were on a slave constitution only white
property-owning males may vote

*Where Pecos snakes into the plains a cutworm place
of saline water*

No Indian or Chinaman may bear witness against a white man
no woman may vote

*Where earth told Navajo return to that sacred place
you come from*

The many-way blessings of a great
and good land.

MISSOURI RIVER CONVOCATION

God gave us the earth, and the fullness thereof . . .
I do not believe in donating to these indolent savages
the best portion of my territory,
and I do not believe in placing Indians
on an equality between the white man as landholder.

Edward Moody McCook, 1870,
Fifth Territorial Governor of Colorado

Certain moments in history are like a man waking at night
and counting the strokes wrong when he hears a clock strike.

Bernard DeVoto, *Across the Wide Missouri*

If scripture of the gift outright is written in stone
for all to see and honor in the law of nations
you may start with Lewis and Clark
at the mouth of the Missouri

Or at the source
with Arapaho Arikara Assiniboine Blackfoot
Cheyenne Crow Gros Ventre Iowa Mandan
Omaha Otoe Pawnee Sioux Shoshone

Up in Yellowstone country or the Medicine Bow
where snowmelt pools spill their jewels
into the heart of the continent
and every creature's

Heartbeat depends upon the rise
and fall of the river and all its tributaries
plover tern and sturgeon
we among them

To whom a greater sovereignty
the art of healing
is given.