

Rich Murphy

## **The Nobility of Our Existence**

“The only way to deal with an unfree world is to become so absolutely free that your very existence is an act of rebellion.” – Albert Camus

I

### **The MLK Will and Testament**

“... I think one of the big things that happened was that when black people began to be anointed by the trinkets of this capitalist society and began to become big time players and began to become heads of corporations; they became players in the game of our own demise.” - Harry Belafonte

Imported from Africa,  
the farm animals sweated  
under bullwhips and tree limbs  
and bled-out bullets only  
to earn trinkets awarded  
by banks desperate for debtors.  
Dancing at the end, where hope  
once synched around a neck,  
the framed face knows  
more about struggle than  
pale feet could imitate,  
try as privilege does with might.  
Up from slavery to consume  
substitutes for the prize  
when poor people pupils  
with something to teach  
in the streets wait  
to meet human eyes.

2

**“Who the Hell is Diane Nash” - RFK**

“What I've always been looking for: where resides the rebel heart?” – Harry Belafonte

Laying eye beams aside for now,  
chewing nails first thing.  
Room for a rebel takes stock:  
Hammered home experience,  
saw what, blue print read, would.  
A Franciscan poverty vow  
fills for the work day.  
Fields for soccer, rugby, football  
may not do soon.  
The heart beats from inside  
the chest demanding out,  
and by March and a discipline  
in a spring a simple Simone will  
pounds at rock and timber,  
on the polis door.  
Should cream color on walls,  
Obi-Wan through Luke,  
chapter and verse,  
versus the Empire.

3

**The Rebel Communion**

“We just have to get our old coats, dust them off, stop screwing around and just chasing the good times, and get down to business; there's some ass kicking that has to be done.” – Harry Belafonte

Building a church on Standing Rock,  
third from the sun, the Sioux sue  
to continents: “Come over and help us,”  
Sisyphus crying out for strange love,  
for formulas for optimism,  
for courage and intelligence  
for rainbow warriors:

Over low-intensity oppression  
and couch squatters hiding from activism,  
through theoretical equality that conceals

great factual inequalities,  
around murderers transformed into judges  
to assure that no martyrdom occurs,  
“to where the future is the only kind of property  
that the masters willingly concede to the slaves,”

to indigenous, indigenous, indigenous

and global innocence responds with outrage.

## **This Sad Time We must Obey**

“[S]pells are all broken” – William Shakespeare

“[T]he society everywhere is a living myth of significance of human life, a defiant creation of meaning.” – Ernest Becker

I

The Black female protagonist and narrator  
wakes alone in a fallow field.  
A Caucasian woman sitting in a ditch  
along the roadside continues  
to gather facial expression toward composure.

Dusty, Mr. White strides up ahead  
while a hobbling minor character,  
a servant, attempts to catch up.

2

Over a river bank nine judges broke  
the backbone in the great American novel:  
Bound chapters, torn, fluttered  
about the days in the prison;  
the Berlin Wall embedded  
along the Mexican border;  
and pages drifted upon an Indian  
reservation, predicted accumulation, tribe deep.  
A bald bird sails above crying out: “Fiat, fiat.”

3

Once upon yet another exception  
murderers and thieves in churches arrived  
on the wind with promises to inhabitants.  
Instead, enterprise = freedom = intruder weed  
and crab grass from sea to sea.

4

“Read?” “No need!” The business plan.

Pop eyeballs slide into hypno-reenactment  
via sandwich boards and consumer roles  
for canned laughter and a chief demoralization officer.

If the mob can't gun down time  
in broad daylight and before bed,  
then why own it?

5

Besides, the mic used by Cronkite got lost,  
and the slope into airwaves with anything as news  
was forecasted and ignored under foot.

The game show Desublimation for the Precariat 24/7  
possessed during work and at home too.  
Alternate facts and unreason and incivility  
sit at the controls in studios.  
“Truth” lies in Limbo  
having survived the electric chair.

6

A charade took over the 9/11 and Wall Street  
Fear Department before an appetite  
could whet for revenge against the puppeteers.  
The stew sickened  
while the rise for the rest looked  
to Main Street as though a sinkhole triggered.

Lost among the user-illusions,  
the computer despair men  
and every other hominid  
occupying a continent in protest  
reach for banisters and tools without handles.

7

Performing holy hand stands,  
the totalitarian democracy sect  
preys on and on: The money honey.

So unless a graffiti artist starts swinging  
back and forth a school bell  
with all the elementary supplies  
for contingency, the death knell  
resides in tweets, twerks, and just do it.

Title and epigraphs

Last lines from *King Lear*; *The Tempest*. From *Denial of Death* by Ernest Becker

1

Outline of American fiction with Flannery O'Connor in mind.

2

Citizens United court decision. The end of the American Dream illusion. Trump's wall, Standing Rock and bald eagle / spread eagle. Reminder of the relation of debt and fiat in banks.

3

Reference to Exceptionalism (American, British, Roman, etc.) The invasion of the Western Hemisphere by religious fanatics at expense of the indigenous population. The pretense or error that free enterprise is freedom.

4

The business community's lack of responsibility for their role in perpetuating ignorance and illiteracy. (The business student notorious for being poor readers and writers.)

Reference to *Brave New World*. "Why have time if you can't kill it." The function of hypnotism and role-playing in advertisements.

5

The demise of network news. Herbert Marcuse's "repressive desublimation" concept. Zygmunt Bauman's "precarariat" concept. Trump administrations notorious lying that assists in destabilizing the American national mythology.

6

Reference to the function that 9/11 and the Patriot Act played and led up to 2008 banking crisis. Fareed Zakaria's book *The Rise of the Rest*. Reference to fiction's structure around plot.

Reference to Daniel Dennett's "user-illusion" concept and poet-Trump protests.

7

Reference to Sheldon Wolin's "inverted totalitarianism." Graffiti artist as contemporary or future American novelist. Reference to Northrop Frye's "three bells of literature."