Excerpt from *The Rediscovery of North America* by Barry Lopez

Querencia means a beloved place. It can be our homeland, it can be a person or our family. It is where we feel honored, safe and secure and also where we feel challenged and experience growth.

"In Spanish, la querencia refers to a place on the ground where one feels secure, a place from which one's strength of character is drawn. It comes from the verb querer, to desire, but this verb also carries the sense of accepting a challenge, as in a game.

In Spain, querencia is most often used to describe the spot in a bullring where a wounded bull goes to gather himself, the place he returns to after his painful encounters with the picadors and the bandilleros. It is unfortunate that the word is compromised in this way, for the idea itself is quite beautiful-- a place in which we know exactly who we are. The place from which we speak our deepest beliefs. Querencia conveys more than "hearth." And it carries this sense of being challenged-- in the case of a bullfight, by something lethal, which one may want no part of.

I would like to take this word querencia beyond its ordinary meaning and suggest that it applies to our challenge in the modern world, that our search for querencia is both a response to threat and a desire

to find out who we are. And the discovery of a querencia, I believe, hinges on the perfection of a sense of place."

-- by Barry Lopez, The Rediscovery of North America, p.14, Orion Summer, 1992.

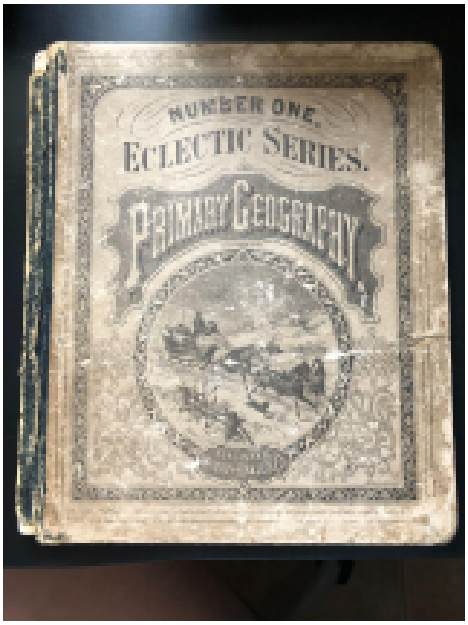
Fort Mose by Tyehimba Jess

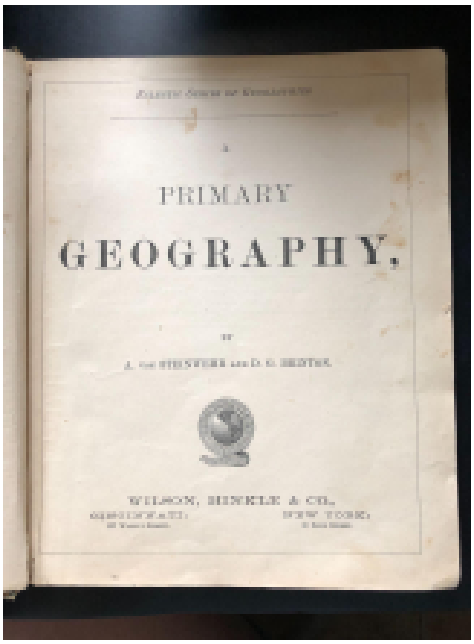
●July 27, 1816: American troops attacked Negro Fort, a stockade in Spanish Florida established by the British and left to the Black Seminoles, a Native American nation of Creek refugees, free black people and fugitives from slavery. Nearly all the soldiers, women and children in the fort were killed.

They weren't headed north to freedom
—
They fled away from the North Star,
turned their back on the Mason
-
Dixon line,
put their feet to freedom by fleeing
further south to Florida.
Ran to where 'gator and viper roamed
free in the mosquito swarm of Suwannee.
They slipped out deep after sunset,
shadow to shadow, shoulder to shoulder,
stealthing southward, stealing themselves,
steeling their souls to run steel
through any slave catcher who'd dare
try stealing them back north.
They billeted in swamp mud,
saw grass and cypress
—
they waded through waves
of water lily and duckweed.
They th
inned themselves in thickets
and thorn bush hiding their young
from thieves of black skin marauding
under moonlight and cloud cover.
Many once knew another shore
an ocean away, whose language,
songs, stories were outlawed
on plantation ground. In swampland
,
they raised flags of their native tongues
above whisper smoke
into billowing bonfires
of chant, drum and chatter.
They remembered themselves
with their own words
bleeding into English,
bonding into Spanish,
singing in Creek and Creole.
With their sweat
forging farms in
unforgiving heat,

never forgetting scars
of the lash, fighting
battle after battle
for generations.
Creeks called them
Seminole
when they bonded with renegade Creeks.
Spaniards called them
cimarrones,
runaways
—
escapees from Carolina
plantation death
-
prisons.
English simply called them
maroons
,
flattening the Spanish to make them
seem alone, abandoned, adrift
—
but they were bonded,
side by side,
Black and Red,
in a blood red hue
—
maroon.
Sovereignty soldiers,
Black refugees,
self
-
abo
litionists, fighting
through America's history,
marooned in a land
they made their own,
acre after acre,
plot after plot,
war after war,
life after life.
They fought only
for America to let them be
marooned
—
left alone
—
in their own unchained,
singing,
worthy
blood.

Pages & Excerpts from “A Primary Geography”





Photos on Native American Assimilation from *The Sun*

Three Sioux indians as they arrived at the Carlisle Indian School in 1883 and an after snap taken years later.
Credit: Public Domain/News Dog Media

Four Native American children taken in 1880, just a year after the Carlisle Indian School opened
Credit: Public Domain/News Dog Media

"On the Question of Race" by Quique Aviles & Michelle Banks

They ask me to write down
my race

And I think
and think
very seriously

and consider
writing down the truth
and have my answer read

I have a dark man
listening to a bolero
lighting a match
inside this body

I have a drunk man
asking for directions
he wants to go home
wants you to tell him
which highway leads to Cuzcatlan

I have a kid in the fifth grade
who says he's American
"But my father's from El Salvador
and my mother is black"
I have all these people
these drums
these guiros
all these aguacates

this prescribed latinhood
this Hispaniard name
that doesn't agree with
English only

They ask me to write down
my race
and I think
very seriously
and consider
writing down the truth
and have my answer read

They ask me to write down
my race

And I think
and think
very seriously

and consider
writing down the truth
and have my answer read

I have another woman
who looks like me
she comes to me when I am dreaming
she is trying to teach me the words
to a language that I used to know

I have a brown man
he is painting a picture
we share a secret
it hides in the memory of a kiss
I have an old man
he is singing
patting juba
passing the tradition on
through the rhythms in his hands

I have all the voices
that have not yet learned to speak
orisha
tormentas
sewas
ancestors

a school girl in Bahia
and a young man cutting cane in Miami
inside this body

I have all these rhythms
these languages
these songs

They ask me to write down
my race

I have my tia Menche
tia Zoila
a mi abuela
A la señora con chile
a la pupusa lady
and Lorenzo's
inside my body

I have 18th & Columbia Rd
15 & Irving
Petworth
Shaw
Julio Iglesias
and Jackson 5
and Lilio Gonzales
inside this body

I have a son
named John Enrique
who's brown and black
and human and tender

I have you
inside this body

But I stop

And simply
write down

"Hispanic."

–Enrique Aviles, 1991

and I think
very seriously
and consider
writing down the truth
and have my answer read

I have my aunt josephine
my uncle james
and my grandfathers poetry
inside this body

I have doubledutch
miss mary mat
and king of the mountain
inside this body

I have rare essence
sarah vaughn
tonya la nera
and a yaqui deer song
inside this body

I have the shrimp boat
florida avenue bar and grill
and dona ezusena
inside this body

I have eastgate
simple city
spotslyvania county, va
orangeburg, sc
central square
and old pascua village
inside this body

I have my grandmothers laughter
inside this body

But I stop

And simply
write down

Black

–Michelle A. Banks, 1991

Where I'm From by George Ella Lyon

I am from clothespins,
from Clorox and carbon-tetrachloride.
I am from the dirt under the back porch.
(Black, glistening,
it tasted like beets.)
I am from the forsythia bush
the Dutch elm
whose long-gone limbs I remember
as if they were my own.
I'm from fudge and eyeglasses,
        from Imogene and Alafair.
I'm from the know-it-alls
        and the pass-it-ons,
from Perk up! and Pipe down!
I'm from He restoreth my soul
        with a cottonball lamb
        and ten verses I can say myself.
I'm from Artemus and Billie's Branch,
fried corn and strong coffee.
From the finger my grandfather lost
        to the auger,
the eye my father shut to keep his sight.
Under my bed was a dress box
spilling old pictures,
a sift of lost faces
to drift beneath my dreams.
I am from those moments--
snapped before I budded --
leaf-fall from the family tree.

Chained Migration: How Slavery Made Its Way West by Tiya Miles

Slavery leapt out of the East and into the interior lands of the Old Southwest in the 1820s and 1830s. Cotton began to soar as the most lucrative product in the global marketplace just as the slaveholding societies of the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic were reaching limits in soil fertility. To land speculators, planters, ambitious settlers and Northern investors, the fertile lands to the west now looked irresistible.

The Native American nations that possessed the bulk of those lands stood in the way of this imagined progress. President Andrew Jackson, an enslaver from Tennessee famous for brutal "Indian" fighting in Georgia and Florida, swooped in on the side of fellow enslavers, championing the Indian Removal Act of 1830. When Congress passed the bill by a breathtakingly slim margin, Cherokees, Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws and Seminoles in the South as well as Potawatomis, Wyandots, Odawas, Delawares, Shawnees and Senecas in the Midwest were relocated toan uncharted space designated as Indian Territory (including present-day Oklahoma and Kansas). "Removal," as the historian Claudio Saunt argues in a forthcoming book on the topic, was far too quiet a word to capture the violation of this mass "expulsion" of 80,000 people.

As new lands in the Old Southwest were pried open, white enslavers back east realized that their most profitable export was no longer tobacco or rice. A complex interstate slave trade became an industry of its own. This extractive system, together with enslavers moving west with human property, resulted in the relocation of approximately one million enslaved black people to a new region. The entrenched practice of buying, selling, owning, renting and mortgaging humans stretched into the American West along with the white settler-colonial population that now occupied former indigenous lands.

Slaveholding settlers who had pushed into Texas from the American South wanted to extend cotton agriculture and increase the numbers of white arrivals. "It was slavery that seemed to represent the soft underbelly of the Texas unrest," the historian Steven Hahn asserts in "A Nation Without Borders." Armed conflict between American-identified enslavers and a Mexican state that outlawed slavery in 1829 wasamong the causes of the Mexican-American War, which won for the United States much of the Southwest and California.

Texas became the West's cotton slavery stronghold, with enslaved black people making up 30 percent of the state's population in 1860. "Indian Territory" also held a large population of enslaved black people. Mormons, too, kept scores of enslaved laborers in Utah. The small number of black people who arrived in California, New Mexico and Oregon before mid century usually came as property. Even as most Western states banned slavery in their new constitutions, individual enslavers held onto their property-in-people until the Civil War.

Enslaved men who had served in the Union Army were among the first wave of African-Americans to move west of their own free will. They served as soldiers, and together with wives and children they formed pocket communities in Montana, Colorado, New Mexico and Texas. It is a painful paradox that the work of black soldiers centered on what the historian Quintard Taylor has called "settler protection" in his classic 1998 study of African-Americans in the West, "In Search of the Racial Frontier." Even while bearing slavery's scars, black men found themselves carrying out orders to secure white residents of Western towns, track down "outlaws" (many of whom were people of color), police the federally imposed boundaries of Indian reservations and quell labor strikes. "This small group of black men," Taylor observes, "paid a dear price in their bid to earn the respect of the nation.