

Bone and Sinew

I wanted to know how a pencil sharpener worked, so I tried it on my finger.
I wanted to know how words were born, so I made up new rules, shared them with friends
and spelling tests –
sent to the back of the room, the cloakroom, the hallway, the third floor with the special kids,
ones with braces and fancy chairs, earphones and tapping canes.
Summers and winters: monkey-in-the-middle, cigar box banjos, arrowheads liverwurst
sandwiches, folk songs in an alley, skating on iced puddles, but then
the president was assassinated – a new word to taste, a word of change;
I decided such words were not allowed in *my* language,
like the horses in *Gulliver's Travels* who had no word for war.
I marched for civil rights
mourned the loss of a man with a dream, a dream still gainsaid
honored those lost at Kent State, joined the call for peace,
writhed against men who thought I needed a man
and women who thought I made my bed.
An epoch of Laundromats with babies in tow, toasted cheese, hot cocoa and popcorn by a fire
while the rebel roiled
simmered, molten
until, car pools and field trips fading,
borne back, demesnes crashing –
eyes glimmering
a smile teasing
dancing naked.

~ Evelyn Dunbar Webb

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