
Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Zaji Cox: “Those Who Came Before Us”

Zaji Cox · Wednesday, June 3rd, 2020

Those Who Came Before Us

We dig in different places,
fingernails on the packed earth of photos
DNA tests
stories of ancestors kidnapped from tribes;
we search for the soil of family history
to tell us about ourselves beyond the
Irish Danish French German Native American
Black and White
that make up my sister and me.
The difference in fathers but sameness in mother
multiplies our research and explanations to others.
We have created a recitation, a song:
*We're actually not just Black, we are
Irish Danish French German Native American
Black and White*
and for the others, it creates
an overwhelm
of options
and categories.

But there is more
and we need to know it.

~

When there is a history to be learned
not only of others, but of yourself—
when you must find the deepest truths
both spoken and unspoken
and learn their language—
how do you at once ask
and accept? Learn
and unlearn? Add a verse
to your song?

How do you excavate
the unfinished;
how do you examine the self
and stand
resilient
in your defined being?

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