

A Poem, Perfect for Our Time



Lawrence Ferlinghetti

by Phyllis Chesler

My friend and colleague, Rose Garrity, a determined and heroic woman, ran a shelter for survivors for more than thirty years. Rose understands what oppression and violence can do to a woman. My dear friend, Bob Brannon, introduced us. Yesterday, Rose responded to that newly discovered family photo of myself—and sent me a poem, perfect for our moment in history. Really, the poem is timeless. Read it for yourself and see.

"PITY THE NATION"

Lawrence Ferlinghetti (After Khalil Gibran) 2007

Pity the nation whose people are sheep
And whose shepherds mislead them

Pity the nation whose leaders are liars
Whose sages are silenced
And whose bigots haunt the airwaves

Pity the nation that raises not its voice
Except to praise conquerors
And acclaim the bully as hero
And aims to rule the world
By force and by torture

Pity the nation that knows
No other language but its own
And no other culture but its own

Pity the nation whose breath is money
And sleeps the sleep of the too well fed

Pity the nation oh pity the people
who allow their rights to erode
and their freedoms to be washed away

My country, tears of thee
Sweet land of liberty!