

Abecedarian Requiring Further Examination of Anglikan Seraphym Subjugation of a Wild Indian Rezervation

By Natalie Diaz

Angels don't come to the reservation.
Bats, maybe, or owls, boxy mottled things.
Coyotes, too. They all mean the same thing—
death. And death
eats angels, I guess, because I haven't seen an angel
fly through this valley ever.
Gabriel? Never heard of him. Know a guy named Gabe though—
he came through here one powwow and stayed, typical
Indian. Sure he had wings,
jailbird that he was. He flies around in stolen cars. Wherever he stops,
kids grow like gourds from women's bellies.
Like I said, no Indian I've ever heard of has ever been or seen an angel.
Maybe in a Christmas pageant or something—
Nazarene church holds one every December,
organized by Pastor John's wife. It's no wonder
Pastor John's son is the angel—everyone knows angels are white.
Quit bothering with angels, I say. They're no good for Indians.
Remember what happened last time
some white god came floating across the ocean?
Truth is, there may be angels, but if there are angels
up there, living on clouds or sitting on thrones across the sea wearing
velvet robes and golden rings, drinking whiskey from silver cups,
we're better off if they stay rich and fat and ugly and
'xactly where they are—in their own distant heavens.
You better hope you never see angels on the rez. If you do, they'll be marching you off to
Zion or Oklahoma, or some other hell they've mapped out for us.

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Natalie Diaz was born in the Fort Mojave Indian Village in Needles, California. She is Mojave and an enrolled member of the Gila River Indian community. Diaz lives in Mohave Valley, Arizona, where she has worked with the last speakers of Mojave and directed a language revitalization program. In a PBS interview, she spoke of the connection between writing and experience: "for me writing is kind of a way for me to explore why I want things and why I'm afraid of things and why I worry about things. And for me, all of those things represent a kind of hunger that comes with being raised in a place like this."