

SAINT PAUL CULTURAL GARDEN

Dedicated November 1, 1993
A gift to the City from The St. Paul Foundation

Roberta Hill Whiteman

In my voice the wind holds onto visions.
Sorrow grips my heart: twelve an acre,
Kangi Ci-stin-na's tears.
The old ones speak
in thunder,
in the roots of the Great Wood
swelling beneath tar and steel.

This river remembers its ancient name,
Ha-ha wa-kpa. Where young and old
danced in harmony
before trade became more valuable
than lives

Soyini Guyton

Once I was a mighty river
it was rapture to serve peoplekind, but
something besides my mighty current
moved with me --
cargo and
contraband
and sorrows too deep
for even the Mississippi to fathom.

Xeng Sue Yang

A water buffalo will fight until it snaps its tether.
This year I fight and it snap[s] my heart.
Now I live in this land of plenty
and remember my long distant home
where ancestors shared their mov dej
of bitter spinach boiled in spring water.

Sandra Benitez

In the south our people are made of corn.

Long ago, some turned broad backs on the north,
where others trudged toward it, their corn-hearts
safe-guarding the crossing.

Once north, we learned a sober truth:

The true border is not the river.
La frontera verdadera no es el rio.

It is the long shadow our ancestors cast.
They beckon again and again.

David Mura

touch this sun hot stone
somewhere an emergency
no siren burning

late in a century of fire I came here
my skin interlaced with the feel of fire

Nakamura Nuetong Li Nguyen
the names unfold like an American rose

frost and the ghost of frost
Asia so far away

John Minczeski

How many times we said One Nation Indivisible...
Our grandparents found these streets paved
with sweat and dirt, not gold. Glass, steel
and stone grew where only grass and trees had been.
Look carefully now -- the river will remember nothing of this.

In the garden's railing along the river, the poets wrote:

From I-mni-za ska, the white cliffs
across the river, our singing still
rises toward the stars

No melting pot
here distinct sorrows, misgivings, triumphs
Can a river reverse its course?

We cross from old memory
of adobe, maiz, and sunny dust
to fields of ice and northern lights

History is the tale of victors
the color of your skin
the rain and the wind

To cross a river I shall take off my shoes
To cross a country I shall take off my head.

Before you the river pulses with many voices. Watch it carefully
What you dream can become real

The Saint Paul Cultural Garden was designed by artist Cliff Garten in collaboration with artists Ta-Coumba Aiken and Armando Guterrez and landscape architect Xiaowei Mei.