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Poems Read the Kelly Writers House on the Campus of the  
University of Pennsylvania,

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D. H. Kerby

[DHKerby@alum.Swarthmore.edu](mailto:DHKerby@alum.Swarthmore.edu)

A Poem against the Vestiges of Bush-Era Xenophobic Paranoid Hypervigilance

When Thomas Jefferson wrote that  
Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty  
He meant that the people should watch the government,  
Not that the people should assume a posture of  
Hostile suspicion towards each  
Other, looking for exaggerated foreign threats  
To be seized upon by the state  
And used to promote an ersatz unity  
Which that state cannot achieve on its own merits.

And here's my message to all of the  
Workers for public utilities in Philadelphia:  
It is my opinion that you should stop  
Reporting people to the government for  
Being middle-eastern or South Asian,  
If that is indeed what you are doing.

In fact, no one should ever be reported to any government which violates  
Human rights on grounds of religion, nationality, political belief, or how  
She or he was born.

It seems to me that neighbors should be aware  
Of neighbors for neighbors' sake,  
And not that neighbors should be aware of neighbors  
For the state.

To be Heard Equally

You hear me  
Because of gifts,  
Including some from

*Nike Lockheed Martin West Pharmaceuticals*

Do they control what you hear me say?  
To turn down the volume  
On the megaphones of the Becks and Limbaughs and O'Reillys  
And increase the peace-  
ful voices of ordinary people -  
Not to silence anyone,

Only to democratize communication  
And what is democracy?  
It is equality of political power.

*Nike sweatshops  
Lockheed Martin napalm  
West Pharmaceuticals drug trials*

"Amandla awehtu!" means "Power to the people" in the language of  
Mandela's tribe, and what is amandla?  
What is power?  
For the British philosopher Francis Bacon,  
It is knowledge...  
In Greek, Gnossois, in German, Erkenntnis.  
And who should decide what the people know?  
Is it generals, chiefs of freedom of information act sections  
Of government agencies?  
Or is it the editors of major daily newspapers?  
And what does a good journalist do?  
She or he empowers the people with knowledge.

Michael Foot died recently -  
A British Parliamentarian  
Noted for his defense of free speech  
In time of war.

If it's a horrific human rights atrocity committed by a government,  
It shouldn't matter that a government, any government, says  
It's a secret of state;  
It should be in the public domain.

Copenhagen and Paris

As I walked into Copenhagen's Central Train Station, the public address System announced, "Person with universal human rights, walking," And strangers shouted Mandela's name upon seeing me in the streets of Paris Last September; this, for me, was sustenance.