

## American Spoken Here

The list poem came knocking on my door, wanting to know my name.  
The list poem wanted to know from whence I came.  
The list poem was making a list of foreign words, like *Pajama* and *Impala*.  
The list poem planned to send them back to the *Boondocks*.  
The list poem suspected that *Jasmine* was a *Thug* and *Cotton* an *Assassin*.

It started to get bad when they put the alien animals to sleep at the zoo:  
*Jackals* and *Tigers*, *Cheetahs* and *Panthers*, too. And the *Cockatoos*.  
Then the list poem set long nets to keep the foreign fish off our shores, the  
itinerant *Tilapia*. And the *Tuna*.  
Soon they sent squads to the schools, swinging big sticks, seizing non-  
American things. *Lollipops*. And *Yo-yos*.  
Now the list poem has posted new rules in the shop windows: Items with  
foreign names no longer sold here. No *Guitars*. No *Tambourines*. Pot  
sold here, but not *Hashish*. And no more *Burkas*.

The list poem came to our house searching for strange foods, our *Limes* and  
our *Lemons*. I was eating breakfast and the list poem said, "That is my  
*Yoghurt*" and took it from my hand. And then our *Chocolate* and our  
*Sherbert*. Our *Curry Rice Pilaf* and *Spinach*. Our *Sugar*. *Coffee*, *Tea*,  
*Peaches* and *Oranges*, everything we had. The list poem took  
everything. We didn't have anything left.

*We had a large courtyard and all the children were playing ball. And an officer  
was also there. He said to my parents – my father had returned by then  
from fighting overseas – he then said: "You need to leave, you  
Foreigners." And we were afraid.*

Now my neighbors are looking frightened, too. They're secretly burning their  
Arabic things, the *Almanacs* and *Alfalfa* and *Alcohol*.  
The chemists are hiding their *Borax*, the jewelers are done with *Platinum* and  
*Beryl*, the math teachers avoid *Algebra* and *Algorithms*.  
And you have to watch your words. The German and French ones are okay.  
But the list poem has its eye on *Candy*. And *Chess*. And *Khaki*. And  
*Buggering*.

When you see the list poem on the street, it's best not to look right or left.  
Just keeping walking forward, eyes before your feet.  
I hear my *Guru* is in Gitmo. My *Yoga* teacher is in cuffs. I can't get *Zen* because  
they got *Zen* last week. *Nirvana* left on the last bus.  
*Move on, move on, there's nothing to see.* The man in the uniform is looking at  
me.

They're waterboarding *Karma* and *Serendipity*.

*We had to disappear. Otherwise they would have taken us. I remember the day  
I found my neighbors gone and the door was swinging open. I walked  
into the kitchen and the floor was painted red with blood. And none of  
them ever returned. None ever returned.*

The list poem has its supporters, and they have a message for us: Deport all  
the *Roses!* Uproot the *Tulips!* Blackjack that *Lilac!* Vandalize the  
*Sandals!* No *Shampoo* for you, Bugaboo!

They wanted to count down from eleven million without using *Zero*.

They wanted to erase and erase until the page was pure white.

But soon the list poem came for them.

They rounded up the *Pundits*.

They threw that Jew, *Jesus* into a holding camp.

They paved *Paradise* and put up a parking lot.

Now you'll have to golf without a *Caddy*, Mr. President.

And they banned that red Malaysian stuff in *America*. You betcha, no *Ketchup*.

No orange hair now the *Orangutans* are gone.

No *Nebbishes* and *Shlemiels*, no *Shmucks*, *Shlepping* and *Shmoozing*. Hoo boy!

But also, no *Shiksas*. And no *Goys*.

Oh, and while they're at it, all the *Aryans* will have to leave, as well.

And no more *Swastikas*.