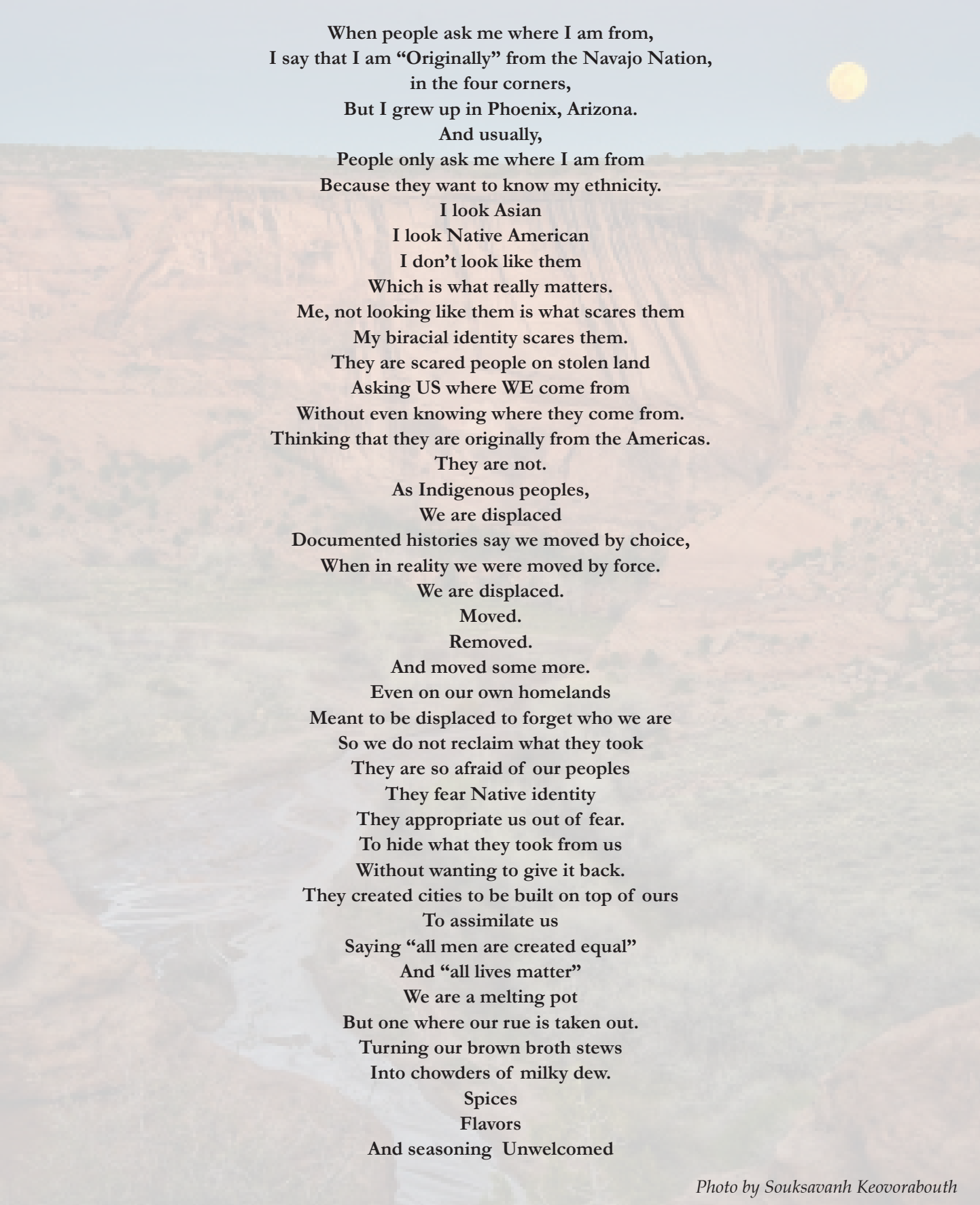


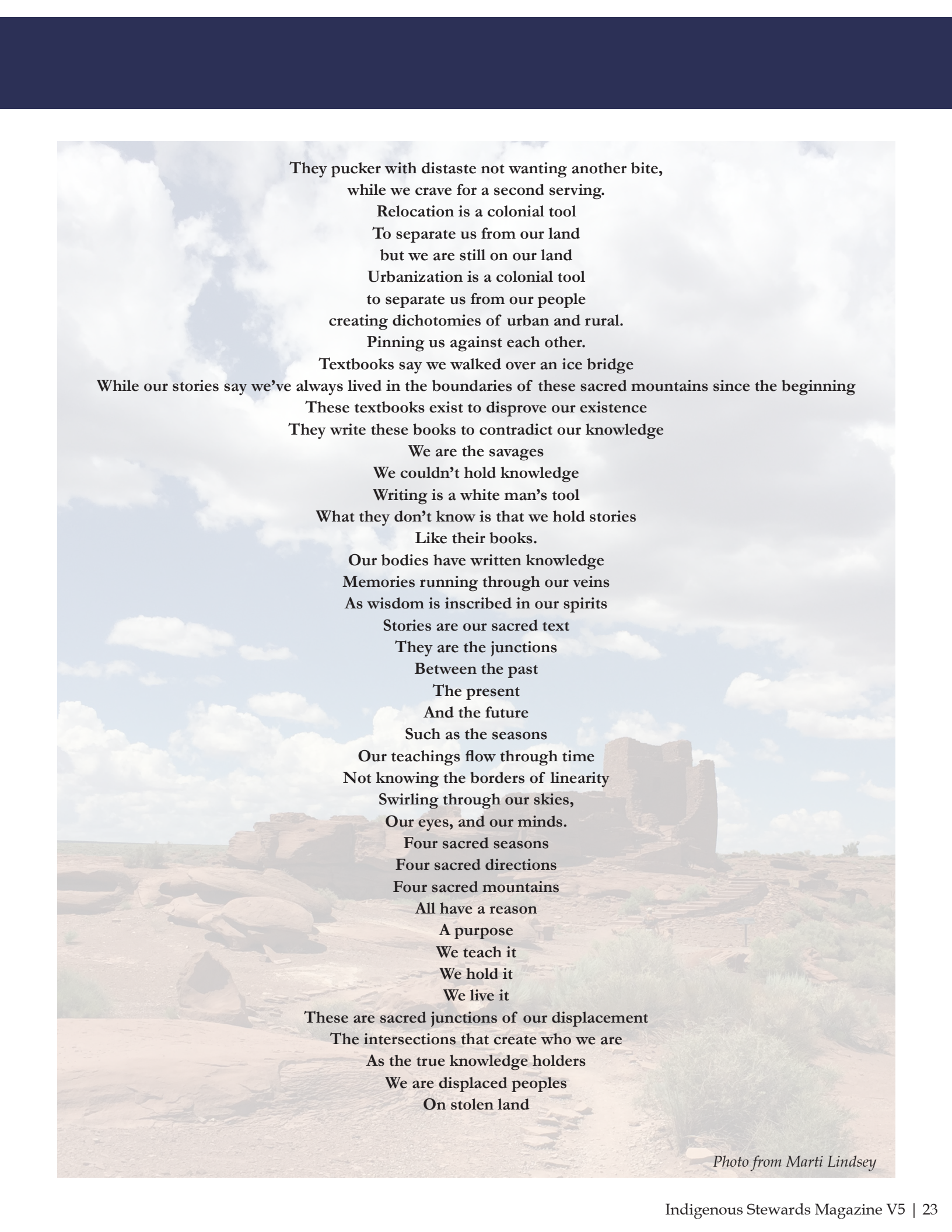
Where I Am From

By: Souksavanh T. Keovorabouth



When people ask me where I am from,
I say that I am “Originally” from the Navajo Nation,
in the four corners,
But I grew up in Phoenix, Arizona.
And usually,
People only ask me where I am from
Because they want to know my ethnicity.
I look Asian
I look Native American
I don’t look like them
Which is what really matters.
Me, not looking like them is what scares them
My biracial identity scares them.
They are scared people on stolen land
Asking US where WE come from
Without even knowing where they come from.
Thinking that they are originally from the Americas.
They are not.
As Indigenous peoples,
We are displaced
Documented histories say we moved by choice,
When in reality we were moved by force.
We are displaced.
Moved.
Removed.
And moved some more.
Even on our own homelands
Meant to be displaced to forget who we are
So we do not reclaim what they took
They are so afraid of our peoples
They fear Native identity
They appropriate us out of fear.
To hide what they took from us
Without wanting to give it back.
They created cities to be built on top of ours
To assimilate us
Saying “all men are created equal”
And “all lives matter”
We are a melting pot
But one where our rue is taken out.
Turning our brown broth stews
Into chowders of milky dew.
Spices
Flavors
And seasoning Unwelcomed

Photo by Souksavanh Keovorabouth

The background of the page is a photograph of a desert landscape. In the foreground, there are large, reddish-brown rocks and a dirt path. In the middle ground, there are several ancient stone structures, possibly ruins of a civilization, built on a hillside. The sky is bright blue with scattered white clouds. The overall scene is arid and historical.

They pucker with distaste not wanting another bite,
while we crave for a second serving.
Relocation is a colonial tool
To separate us from our land
but we are still on our land
Urbanization is a colonial tool
to separate us from our people
creating dichotomies of urban and rural.
Pinning us against each other.
Textbooks say we walked over an ice bridge
While our stories say we've always lived in the boundaries of these sacred mountains since the beginning
These textbooks exist to disprove our existence
They write these books to contradict our knowledge
We are the savages
We couldn't hold knowledge
Writing is a white man's tool
What they don't know is that we hold stories
Like their books.
Our bodies have written knowledge
Memories running through our veins
As wisdom is inscribed in our spirits
Stories are our sacred text
They are the junctions
Between the past
The present
And the future
Such as the seasons
Our teachings flow through time
Not knowing the borders of linearity
Swirling through our skies,
Our eyes, and our minds.
Four sacred seasons
Four sacred directions
Four sacred mountains
All have a reason
A purpose
We teach it
We hold it
We live it
These are sacred junctions of our displacement
The intersections that create who we are
As the true knowledge holders
We are displaced peoples
On stolen land

Photo from Marti Lindsey