



Obsidian, Pacific Crest Trail, Three Sisters Wilderness, Oregon

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### In Memoriam<sup>1</sup>

Angles of blue-black obsidian  
diffract the morning light  
into a rainbow of colors that  
stand mute  
    in remembrance  
    of all who walked before  
    here  
    in this place.

This place  
    —now in the white man’s wilderness area;  
    a place for reflective solitude—

was,  
in earlier millennia,  
a thriving center  
a nexus of trade<sup>2</sup>  
among Native peoples  
    —descended from immigrants  
    like all who have been, are, will be  
    born in this land that today  
    we call North America—

who  
    lived  
    loved  
    laughed  
    cried  
    died  
    here  
    in this place.

And who,  
by the time they were “discovered”  
had already been decimated  
by the white man’s diseases  
    —so much more effective  
    than the obsidian points  
    honed here  
    given traded sold to  
    friends hunters enemies—  
and could barely resist the onslaught  
that continues to this day  
and in this place.

Still unappeased,  
the white man turned inward  
raging against himself  
    —his proclivity to spawn with  
    anyone anything anybody anyrace—  
and the peoples he created  
in his mind  
    —images supported by fraud  
    maintained by hatred  
    perpetuated by the state—  
and in his place.

Refracted through obsidian’s mirror  
    —black skin  
    blue uniforms  
    blood red—  
we now see all those  
    —who  
    walked before  
    walk now  
    will keep on walking—  
and we will remember  
    every name  
    every face  
    every person  
    killed  
    in every place.

8 July 2016

<sup>1</sup>For all those who have lost their lives in recent days to terrorism, state-sponsored violence, and hatred.

<sup>2</sup>A good introduction to the importance of the Obsidian Cliffs in the present-day Three Sisters Wilderness to trade among Native American peoples, see T. J. Connolly, C. E. Skinner, and P. W. Baxter (2015) “Ancient trade roots for Obsidian Cliffs and Newberry Volcano toolstone in the Pacific Northwest. Pages 180-192 in T. L. Ozburn and R. L. Adams, *editors*, Toolstone Geography of the Pacific Northwest. Archaeology Press, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada.