

Catherine Lucas

LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE

On election night in Berkeley, I fantasize moving to a Red State,
somewhere that needs me as a kind of leavening.
I'll make friends over coffee, disarm the enemy, become trusted;
think aloud, give events my spin, one by one convert
the best of them, and they would teach others, and others would—
But.

Even in Berkeley, I can't persuade my dearest friend to reconsider her ill-
informed opposition to nuclear energy, our main point of difference.
Unreconciled, we table the topic: breath eases, pulse slows, belly softens.

My family in Texas and S. C. have agreed: no politics—no more bullish
arguments, heat behind our eyes, stomachs cramping as we fight to
change one another's stubborn minds. None of us ever anything but
right.
Hate hovers, a vulture seeking carrion.

I choose to live among like-minded people. Safe to smile at strangers. We may
disagree on Organic versus GMO's, charter versus public schools, the death
penalty. But we expect to agree on the presidency and who should command
the senate. This much we have in common.

Meanwhile, on sidewalks in Red towns and counties, it is likewise safe to smile
at strangers. Neighbors may disagree on infrastructure, taxes, school hours,
even climate change. But most expect to agree on the presidency and who
should command the senate. This much they have in common.

On election night, I wonder if any one of them fantasizes about moving to
California—as a sort of leavening. Make converts, save the country. Part of me
hopes they'll stay in their enclaves with like-minded people, as I do.

Another part lies awake. Sad. Angry. A little afraid. So many people who don't
know how wrong they are, who can't be persuaded to change their stubborn
minds. I sense them in the night, awake like me. Sad. Angry. A little afraid.
Hate hovers.

This much we have in common.