Looking For Home

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Looking For Home
(for Jesse Jackson)
Jennifer Grace

how it must be
this walk to the stage
your face lighted
by camera lamps
and bright blinding flashes
the press of eager people
their minds also flashing
their eyes pulling you

before you take the podium
remember the walk
the trudge from Selma to Washington
over hot asphalt
how their feet must have burned
in those tight black shoes
the clothes crawling on their backs
the stares of enemies
on the gravel shoulder
also climbing their backs
perfect targets

or another walk
from Georgia to Oklahoma
the sting of salt and dust
the children crying and tired
the low hum
of moaning and singing
and the shimmer
of whispered negotiations
and refraction of heat
on the trail

the sudden trip
from San Francisco to encampment
the hasty drop and packing
leaving behind home
businesses familiarities
for flat wood beds
and land and days
moving slowly
as subterra plates

or thinking of my own
and my mother’s
wander between buildings
and offices saved nightly
by the Salvation Army with warm
soup cots a shower
we hide our hands in the pockets
of our free Goodwill parkas
displaced distressed
and still looking
for home

how it must be
to stand up
to be exposed
to testify
to a bouquet of microphones
on days when you are tired
of strange rooms and languages
when trouble
lies like a lump
in your stomach
and better memories jingle
like the coins in your pocket