

BIRD NAMES IN LENAPE

Qwo-Li Driskill

Characters:

North American Broadcasting Company (NABC): A white person of any gender.

Lenapehoking: (Name for Lenape homelands) A Native woman, preferably an elder.

Lenape Voice: A Native person of any gender.

NABC: (As Newscaster) The world stopped in awe and horror today to witness the terrorist attacks on New York and the Pentagon, the largest such attacks ever on US soil.

Lenapehoking:

Amherst
Columbus
Cortez
DeSoto
Hudson
de León
Minit

NABC: (As George W. Bush) The pictures of airplanes flying into buildings, fires burning, huge structures collapsing, have filled us with disbelief, terrible sadness, and a quiet, unyielding anger.

Lenapehoking: Amherst, Columbus, Cortez, DeSoto, Hudson, deLeón, Minuit.

NABC: (As Bush): These acts of mass murder were intended To frighten our nation into chaos and retreat. But they have failed: our country is strong.

Lenape Voice: American tongues hunger for blood, mouths are open and wait for every crimson drop.

NABC: (As Anthropologist) Figure 6: Grave of Skeletons with Arrow Points.

Lenape Voice: The towers were forged by Mohawk hands. Iroquois workers silhouette steel crossbeams. The skyscrapers plunged into Lenape graves.

NABC: (As Anthropologist) The ceremonial pits at 212th Street and certain remains of aboriginal feasting appear to exist at a level below the graves of settlers' slaves.

Lenapehoking: Extinct Birds of the United States:
Ivory Billed Woodpecker, Reported to be seen in Louisiana, 1999. Search is ongoing.
Dusky Seaside Sparrow, 1987.
Texas Henlow's Sparrow, 1983.
Santa Barbara Song Sparrow, 1967.

NABC: (As Anthropologist) Figure 7: Bones Punctured by Arrow Points from Skeletons found on Staten Island.

Lenape Voice: One year later, at ground zero, Rudolph Giuliani recites the names of the dead over Yo-Yo Ma's rendition of Bach's C Minor Cello Suite.

NABC: (As Newscaster) You can hear from the reciting of names that everyone has been touched by the tragedy of 9/11. Every ethnicity, every profession, is among the dead: janitors

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and executives, black and white, citizens of the United States and abroad. No-one could have imagined such an event could take place in our own country.

Lenape Voice: No nation can continue built on foundations of bone. I'm praying for Lenapehoking to break free.

NABC: (As Bush) A great people has been moved to defend a great nation. Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shattered steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve.

Lenapehoking:

Heath Hen, 1932.

San Clemente Bewick's Hen, 1927.

Lenape Voice: The imagined taste of bedrock, the prayer something green shatters concrete.

NABC: (As Anthropologist) Archeological Remains:

Lenapehoking:

Passenger Pigeon, 1914.

Carolina Parakeet, 1914.

Louisiana Parakeet, 1912.

Great Auk, 1907.

Labrador Duck, 1878.

Kausaie Crake, 1828.

Kausaie Starling, 1828.

NABC: Articles of Stone.

Articles of Clay.

Articles of Metal.

Articles of Shell.

Lenape Voice: Something pushes through stone.

NABC: (As Anthropologist) Governor Peter Minuit, on behalf of the Dutch West India Company, purchased the island of Manhattan from the Delaware, or Lenape Tribe of Indians, for 60 guilders worth of trade goods. Minuit died at sea in 1638.

Lenape Voice: The universe longs for justice.

NABC: (As Newscaster) In memory of the brave men and women who died on that tragic day, we will never forget.

Lenape Voice: The TV tells us

NABC: Largest attack on US soil

Lenape Voice: I remember
Gold Rush.
Wounded Knee.
Trail of Tears.
Long Walk.
Meeker Massacre.
Sand Creek.
Allotment.

Lenapehoking: Bird Names in Lenape:

Lenape Voice: I remember

NABC: Nits make lice

Lenapehoking:

Tānkityas, Tufted Titmouse

NABC:

The only good Indian
is a dead Indian.

Lenape Voice: Boarding school

Lenapehoking: Tāskēmus, Mockingbird

Lenape Voice: Mass Removals

NABC: Kill the Indian, Save the Man

Lenapehoking: Chihopèkēlis, Eastern Bluebird

Lenape Voice: Slaughter

Lenapehoking:

Wetēndeis, Scarlet Tanager

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Wisawtayas, American
Goldfinch

Lenape Voice:
Destruction of life
and language

NABC:
Extirpate this
execrable
race.

Tihtēs, Downy
Woodpecker

Lenape Voice: Small pox blankets.

Relocation.

Termination.

Lenapehoking: Sēnihēle, Sparrow Hawk

Hinutēt, Wren

Chiskukus, Robin

Lenape Voice: Contraptions of glass and steel built on
Lenapehoking.

Lenapehoking: Lelèmbēlis, Ruby-Throated Hummingbird
Amimi, Passenger Pigeon

Lenape Voice: When the towers fell

Lenape Voice/Lenapehoking: I cried for us, for what plans
could unfold now.

NABC: (As Bush): War on Terror.

Axis of Evil.

American Resolve.

NABC/Lenape Voice: Nits make lice

NABC:

War on Terror

Axis of Evil

American Resolve

War On Terror

Axis of Evil

American Resolve

Nits make lice

Lenape Voice:

Manifest Destiny

Mass Removal

Loss of Language

War On Terror

Manifest Destiny

Mass Removal

Loss of Language

Lenapehoking:

Passenger Pigeon

1914

Louisiana Parakeet

1912

Passenger Pigeon

1914

Amimi

Carolina Parakeet

1912

Name Forgotten

Lenape Voice: New Amsterdam. New Netherlands. New England. New Jersey. New York. New Worlds fall into darkness, slip into seas.

NABC: (As Newscaster) The world stopped in awe and horror today to witness the terrorist attacks on New York and the Pentagon, the largest such attacks ever on US soil.

Lenape Voice: We remember our names as empires fall to rubble. The soil beneath subways whispers instructions, words we thought were lost, maps to what will happen next.

Lenapehoking: Carolina Parakeet. Name Forgotten.

Lenape Voice: This is the beginning.

Production Notes:

The words of George W. Bush are his own. The voice of the anthropologist includes several bits of “found” text.

Wa'do / Thanks to the Delaware (Lenape) Nation of Northeastern Oklahoma's website, whose language resources provided the title and inspiration for this play.

Bird Names in Lenape was originally performed as a staged reading at the Capitol Hill Arts Center in Seattle, WA on September 11, 2003 as part of the Democracy Playhouse.