

**UCLA**

**American Indian Culture and Research Journal**

**Title**

The Path to the Milky Way Leads through Los Angeles (poem)

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8n25v1f4>

**Journal**

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 22(4)

**ISSN**

0161-6463

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**Publication Date**

1998-09-01

**DOI**

10.17953

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## The Path to the Milky Way Leads through Los Angeles

There are strangers above me, below me and all around me and we are all strange in this place of recent invention.

This city named for angels appears naked and stripped of anything resembling the shaking of turtle shells, the songs of human voices on a summer night outside Okmulgee.

Yet, it's perpetually summer here, and beautiful. The shimmer of gods is easier to perceive at sunrise or dusk,

when those who remember us here in the illusion of the marketplace turn toward the changing of the sun and say our names.

We matter to somebody,

We must matter to the strange god who imagines us as we revolve together in the dark sky on the path to the Milky Way.

We can't easily see that starry road from the perspective of the crossing of boulevards, can't hear it in the whine of civilization or taste the minerals of planets in hamburgers.

But we can buy a map here of the stars' homes, dial a tone for dangerous love, choose from several brands of water, or a hiss of oxygen for gentle rejuvenation.

Everyone knows you can't buy love but you can still sell your soul for less than a song, to a stranger who will sell it to someone else for a profit until you're owned by a company of strangers in the city of the strange and getting stranger.

I'd rather understand how to sing from a crow who was never good at singing or much of anything but finding gold in the trash of humans.

So what are we doing here I ask the crow parading on the ledge of falling that hangs over this precarious city?

Crow just laughs and says *wait, wait and see* and I am waiting and not seeing anything, not just yet.

But like crow I collect the shine of anything beautiful I can find.

—Joy Harjo

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Joy Harjo, an enrolled member of the Muscogee Nation, has published many books of poetry, including *In Mad Love and War* and *The Woman Who Fell From the Sky*, and recently coedited an anthology of Native women's writing, *Reinventing the Enemy's Language*. She plays saxophone and performs her poetry with her band, Joy Harjo & Poetic Justice, whose recent CD release, *Letter From the End of the Twentieth Century*, won several awards.