

2022 Santa Fe Reads, NEA Big Read Poetry Contest Winner

3rd Place

Robert Francis “Mudman” Johnson

Roots he said!

**Until you reach down
and gently stroke into the earth
the gnarled and twisted receptors of life
bringing them to the light of day
hugging them to your breast, dripping
the color of red Earth, until you listen
to the songs sung by shifting molecules
and dancing atoms, until you embrace
all that is entirely you; including your ancestors
only your breath will seem to lack meaning.
Ask any redwood about roots?
And poems are written on the backs of flowers
Waiting ever waiting for us to
transform them to our hearts.**