

**DONE**  
By  
Bob Holman

Who thinks of language rights at a time like this? The Wampanoag tribe is – just as the pandemic hit the US, these Native Americans had their tribal status revoked by the Trump administration. The Wampanoags are the tribe who greeted the Pilgrims in 1620. The last speaker died over a hundred years ago. Now, though, the Wampanoags are a model for language revitalization, with a Tribal center that has dedicated language classrooms and an ever-increasing number of speakers. This is the moment that Trump makes his power grab, to take all this away. Just as he is now grabbing private land to build his wall. Just as Orbán in Hungary takes this moment to declare birth the only time gender can be assigned. *Be vigilant to government intrusion under the cover of the Pandemic.* The World Is On Fire

In New York there's plenty of poetry online, including the Bowery Poetry Club's new director Mahogany Browne scheduling daily web events. I am self-quarantined above the shop here on the Bowery, in downtown Manhattan. Of course all cultural centers are closed – the vitality of live performance cannot be replicated on Zoom. The homeless own the streets. Essential workers, mostly brown and black folks, are on the subways. Masks are required by law – not everybody obeys the law. I've been in my apartment for two months. I have one poem to show for it. It's based on the words of John Donne, British metaphysical poet of the 1600s, who wrote,

*Ask not for whom the bell tolls  
It tolls for thee*

My poem goes like this:

*DONE  
Ask not for whom the siren wails  
That's you in there*

Bob Holman, founder of the Bowery Poetry Club, has two new books out: *Life Poem*, a book-length poem written fifty years ago, and *The Unspoken*, Recent and Selected. His work on the oral tradition led to the PBS documentary, *Language Matters*; he is co-founder of the Endangered Language Alliance.