**Land Mines**

I never knew what might set me off, the trigger

A site of a horrible history

A haunting connection or painful memory made tangible

Or something surprisingly unexpected

A map…

Alive with moving red dots showing the massive number of slaves

Moved into Alabama

Where Chuck’s grandparents and great-grandparents were born

A step…

On the stairs to the Alabama State Capitol

At the end of the Selma to Montgomery March

A celebration of perseverance and courage

A panorama…

Of 800 hanging steel monuments memorializing more than 4,400 lynchings

Reminding me one of Chuck’s ancestors—accused of murdering someone

Fled north just 50 miles to the east

A date…

Emmett Till’s birthday—July 25, 1941

A boy known as jovial and a jokester

It could so easily have been the happy-go-lucky Chuck at age 14

If his mother had let him travel to Alabama to visit his great aunt

A drawing…

Showing when miscegenation was overturned in each state

Some after Chuck and I married, despite passage of the 1967 federal law

As state constitutions were not amended to remove miscegenetic language

In [Mississippi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mississippi) in 1987, [South Carolina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Carolina) in 1998, [Alabama in 2000](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2000_Alabama_Amendment_2)

A space…

Eliciting claustrophobia

In the hiding place under a house on the Underground Railroad

A talking drum…

From the slave quarters of a plantation

Like the one in my living room

A field…

With acres of cotton

Now harvested by machines, not hands

A young boy…

Sitting alongside a seen-better-days house

Reminiscent of old black & white photographs

Of poverty across the rural south

A flag…

Huge, on a giant pole along an Alabama highway

Waving its Confederate partiality

A piece of music…

Etta James’ *At Last*

The song Chuck and I would sing together

On reaching home after a long drive

Faces…

In a restaurant where we were the only white ones

Later, a music club without a black one

A testament to how much separation remains

Yet, throughout the trip

The supreme friendliness of everyone we met

Black and white

And the friends

To share the adventure

The hurt, the fun, the food, the music

Friends to share the road with

*Dawn Smart
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