

The American High

by Joe Lapp

*Come in, come in out of the cold
he said. Come in and tell me
about yourself.*

We are the working poor.
We sit up straight and stay up
late. We show up on time
to our construction sites, dirty buildings,
secretarial desks.
We go to the mall on the weekends
to spend our hard-earned cash,
to the local grocery store
for tortillas, rice, collard greens, cheap
hamburger two dollars per pound,
and frozen wings with no meat on them.

*I am high on America...
I believe in the rolling waves of grain though
I have never seen them. I believe in the West
and that it still lives. I believe
that California exists though I have no desire
to go and visit there.*

We are the dealers, the pimps, the hustlers.
We lurk late on street corners and in dark
alleys. We keep our money to ourselves
and never show our hands. We pack heat.
We wear our hard-earned cash
where you can see it: in
leather seats, shoes, designer jeans, the DVDs
on our mother's entertainment shelf.

*I am high on America,
I am high...
on warplanes and machines,
machine guns, high on cruise missiles
and precision guided bombs. I am high
on mines and grenades and unexploded cluster bombs.
I am high on explosions and on oil smoke
coursing through the Baghdad sky, I am high.*

We are the businessmen,
fleecing the poor, looking down
the women bound to rise.
Rest your retirement
with us, we say, we'll rest
on your cash. We'll buy
the politicians, the booze. Boo
we say and everyone jumps. It's just
business. We'll skip jail, thanks, do time
on the yacht instead.

*I am high on America.
I am high on America.
I am high on a drug...
the drug, America.*