

The Bridging Ceremony

A woman on the stage is saying something about America and crying. Or maybe she is crying and saying something about America. I'm not sure if I became aware of her crying or that word—*America*—first. She is, I think, Indian, and we are in a community center watching adults shepherd small children across a decorative bridge. They say something meaningful and heartfelt about each Sam, Rosa, and Jordan, or that's me guessing because I'm sitting in the back, and the adults at the bridge are whispering, I'm convinced of this after nearly an hour in which I'm as unable to hear as my mother sitting beside me who has once again "forgotten" to wear her hearing aid, and really after an hour of straining to hear things about the children of acquaintances and total strangers, things I would have forgotten by the time I reached my car anyway, I see my mother's point—what are we listening for? And then that word rises up and reaches me here in the back—*America*. I don't know and won't find out what has made this young woman cry in front of nearly two hundred strangers, but, based on the news, I think we can guess. I keep watching the children and trying to understand. That word, *America*, it can still make me cry too.