**Ghazal for Tennessee**  
  
There is a sharp complexity with the state of Tennessee   
Stark beauty and brutality coexist in Tennessee   
  
This red clay land was settled by the Chickasaw and Cherokee   
Before Bean, Jackson, or Crockett ever dreamed of Tennessee   
  
Smoky Mountains once towered even more majestically   
This stubborn soil was taken on tear-soaked trails in Tennessee   
  
The daffodils and dogwoods declare spring triumphantly   
Farm fields, tilled by stolen slaves, swallow their graves in Tennessee   
  
We’ll bake casseroles to console you, share our Mam-maw’s recipe   
When your loved ones pass from bullets carried here in Tennessee

Country music and Jack Daniel’s fill the bars with revelry   
But sparkling queens creating scenes are shut down in Tennessee   
  
There’s a distorted marriage of politics and Christianity   
We love our neighbour if they’re white and straight in Tennessee   
  
Dolly Parton started her Imagination Library  
Now these free books help young readers beyond just Tennessee   
  
But if you read suspicious books on critical race theory   
History’s obscene realities get banned in Tennessee  
  
I’ve never known more kindness nor a greater generosity   
But I also know about the white cape and hood of Tennessee

This hatred of the other isn’t just past history

Recently Neo-Nazis waved swastikas in Tennessee   
  
How can we stand this deep hypocrisy of Tennessee?  
How can we heal our blood-soaked land and stay in Tennessee?