

Missisquoi

The national wildlife refuge is named
for this indigenous people
of what is now northern Vermont.
The park attendant notices
a paper cup filled with wildflowers
hanging from my passenger-side window.

She is not indigenous, her complexion
very much the same as mine.
“Did you pick those in the park?”
She asks, and of course my answer is “No,
I picked them this morning
by the side of the highway.”
Pointing to the purple loosestrife
she tells me: “It's an invasive species.
We have been trying to get rid of it
for years. When you throw
these flowers away make sure
they are tightly wrapped in plastic
and completely dead. Otherwise
you will spread it further.”
I promise to abide by her instructions.

Later, after I finish the 1-mile “Discovery Trail”
which begins and ends at the parking lot
I think of something else I might have said,
wonder how she would have responded:

“White people
are an invasive species too.
How many years do you think
It will take us to get rid of them?”

Steve Bloom
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