

Black History Month Resources

POETRY

I Dream a World, by Langston Hughes

I dream a world where man
No other man will scorn,
Where love will bless the earth
And peace its paths adorn.

I dream a world where all
Will know sweet freedom's way,
Where greed no longer saps the soul
Nor avarice blights our day.

A world I dream where black or white,
Whatever race you be,
Will share the bounties of the earth
And every man is free,
Where wretchedness will hang its head
And joy, like a pearl,
Attends the needs of all mankind-
Of such I dream, my world!

Lord, Lord, Open Unto Me, by Howard Thurman

Open unto me, light for my darkness
Open unto me, courage for my fear
Open unto me, hope for my despair
Open unto me, peace for my turmoil
Open unto me, joy for my sorrow
Open unto me, strength for my weakness
Open unto me, wisdom for my confusion
Open unto me, forgiveness for my sins
Open unto me, tenderness for my toughness
Open unto me, love for my hates
Open unto me, Thy Self for myself
Lord, Lord, open unto me!

- Howard Thurman, from "Meditations of the Heart" Thurman who was born in 1899 and raised in the segregated South of USA. He is recognized as one of the great spiritual leaders of the 20th century renowned for his reflections on humanity and our relationship with God. Thurman was a prolific author (writing at least 20 books); perhaps the most famous is *Jesus and the Disinherited* (1949), which deeply influenced Martin Luther King, Jr. and other leaders of the Civil Rights Movement. Thurman was the first black person to be a tenured Dean at a PWI (Boston U). He also cofounded the first interracial church in the US.

'Black and British'? *by Dayna Francis*

'Black and British' should not be a thing,
It should be you, me, him, her, them and they,
But people look to your colour and country for your story,
And assume they realise your inner glory.

It is why some people call me the other black girl's name,
I shake my head and correct them nicely but they do not learn that way...a shame...

Shame on them, or shame on me?
They do not understand, yet I use the same strategy?
Perhaps it is on me to change the way,
I treat those that do not treat me the same?

'Black and British' should not be a thing,
It should be you, me, him, her, them and they,
But people look to your colour and country for your story,
And assume they realise your inner glory.

I am learning we are all the same when we are ill,
Yet they do not treat us with the same pill?
Doctors say it is because they have not seen enough representation,
In their reading of literature beyond one's imagination,
The health of a black life is still incomprehensible?
The physical and mental implications of this are immeasurable...

What can one do to change the tone?
I am fed up of us suffering in silence, alone,
In our lonely plight for equality,
After centuries of ancestors lost in the name of finding peace...

'Black and British' should not be a thing,
It should be you, me, him, her, them and they,
But people look to your colour and country for your story,
And assume they realise your inner glory.

Because the different views we put on others
Can actually form these races and cultures,
And as beautiful as embracing all of that can be,
It takes us away from you being you and me being me.

We found beauty in division- how do we fix that?
It is a challenge, there is no hiding from that fact,

All I know is it will take the minds of those in charge,
To allow our rigid systems to open their arms.

New Day's Lyric, *by Amanda Gorman (1998)*

May this be the day
We come together.
Mourning, we come to mend,
withered, we come to weather,
torn, we come to tend,
battered, we come to better.

Tethered by this year of yearning,
we are learning
that though we weren't ready for this,
we have been readied by it.
We steadily vow that no matter
how we are weighed down,
we must always pave a way forward.

This hope is our door, our portal.
even if we never get back to normal,
someday we can venture beyond it,
to leave the known and take the first steps.
So let us not return to what was normal,
But reach toward what is next.

What was cursed, we will cure.
What was plagued, we will prove pure.
where we tend to argue, we will try to agree,
those fortunes we forswore, now the future we foresee,
where we weren't aware, we're now awake;
those moments we missed
are now these moments we make,
the moments we meet,
and our hearts, once altogether beaten,
now all together beat.

Come, look up with kindness yet,
for even solace can be sourced from sorrow.
We remember, not just for the sake of yesterday,
but to take on tomorrow.

In our hearts, we hear it:
For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne.
Be bold, sang Time this year,
be bold, sang Time,
for when you honor yesterday,
tomorrow ye will find.
Know what we've fought
need not be forgot nor for none.
It defines us, binds us as one,
come over, join this day just begun.

For wherever we come together,
we will forever overcome.

Poet Amanda Gorman has released a new work, just in time for the year's end. And, like her most famous poem, "The Hill We Climb," her latest aims to uplift its listeners (and readers) during challenging times.

For My People, by Margaret Walker

For my people everywhere singing their slave songs
repeatedly: their dirges and their ditties and their blues
and jubilees, praying their prayers nightly to an
unknown god, bending their knees humbly to an
unseen power;

For my people lending their strength to the years, to the
gone years and the now years and the maybe years,
washing ironing cooking scrubbing sewing mending
hoeing plowing digging planting pruning patching
dragging along never gaining never reaping never
knowing and never understanding;

For my playmates in the clay and dust and sand of Alabama
backyards playing baptizing and preaching and doctor
and jail and soldier and school and mama and cooking
and playhouse and concert and store and hair and
Miss Choomby and company;

For the cramped bewildered years we went to school to learn
to know the reasons why and the answers to and the
people who and the places where and the days when, in
memory of the bitter hours when we discovered we
were black and poor and small and different and nobody
cared and nobody wondered and nobody understood;

For the boys and girls who grew in spite of these things to
be man and woman, to laugh and dance and sing and
play and drink their wine and religion and success, to
marry their playmates and bear children and then die
of consumption and anaemia and lynching;

For my people thronging 47th Street in Chicago and Lenox
Avenue in New York and Rampart Street in New
Orleans, lost disinherited dispossessed and happy
people filling the cabarets and taverns and other
people's pockets and needing bread and shoes and milk and
land and money and something—something all our own;

For my people walking blindly spreading joy, losing time
being lazy, sleeping when hungry, shouting when
burdened, drinking when hopeless, tied, and shackled
and tangled among ourselves by the unseen creatures
who tower over us omnisciently and laugh;

For my people blundering and groping and floundering in
the dark of churches and schools and clubs
and societies, associations and councils and committees and
conventions, distressed and disturbed and deceived and
devoured by money-hungry glory-craving leeches,
preyed on by facile force of state and fad and novelty, by
false prophet and holy believer;

For my people standing staring trying to fashion a better way
from confusion, from hypocrisy and misunderstanding,
trying to fashion a world that will hold all the people,
all the faces, all the Adams and Eves and their countless generations;

Let a new earth rise. Let another world be born. Let a
bloody peace be written in the sky. Let a second
generation full of courage issue forth; let a people
loving freedom come to growth. Let a beauty full of
healing and a strength of final clenching be the pulsing
in our spirits and our blood. Let the martial songs
be written, let the dirges disappear. Let a race of men now
rise and take control.

Margaret Walker, "For My People" from This is My Century: New and Collected Poems. Copyright © 1989 by Margaret Walker. Use by permission of University of Georgia Press.

Caged Bird, by Maya Angelou

A free bird leaps
on the back of the wind
and floats downstream
till the current ends
and dips his wing
in the orange sun rays
and dares to claim the sky.
But a bird that stalks
down his narrow cage
can seldom see through
his bars of rage
his wings are clipped and
his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

The free bird thinks of another breeze
and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn bright lawn
and he names the sky his own.

But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

I Am Diversity, Please Include Me, *by Charles Bennafield*

I 'm present in every place you go
Depending on your lens I'm friend or foe
I'm a force to be reckoned with
Like the winds of change I move. I'm swift.

I'm present when two or more are together
If embraced I can make the good even better.
I'm not limited to age, gender, or race.

I'm invisible at times and yet all over the place.
Don't exclude me due to a lack of knowledge
Welcome me like the recruit fresh out of college.

Let me take my seat at the table
Even though I may be differently able
My experience, my passion the authentic me
Can help add value for your company.

Learn about me; improve my underrepresentation
And I can provide a competitive edge to your entire nation.
I exclude no one I am strengthened by all
My name is Diversity and yes I stand tall.

Recognize me and keep me in the mix
Together there's no problem that we can't fix.
I am your best hope towards true innovation
And to many, I reflect hope and inspiration.

Your lives and companies will continue to change
Thus the need for Diversity and Inclusion will also remain.
Do all that you can to truly embrace me
And experience life's fullness totally
I'm the thought lurking behind the unfamiliar face
I'm the ingenuity that helps your team win the race.

I'm the solution that came from the odd question that was asked.

I stand out in the crowd when I, Diversity, am allowed to be unmasked.

I'm diversity embrace me and we'll journey far.
I'm Diversity include me and we will reach the shining star.
Coupled with Inclusion our lights burn longer
Together we are smarter, better and stronger
I am Diversity. Yes, that's me.

Written by Charles Bennafield in August 3, 2012 for The Conference Board Diversity Boot Camp held in Spring 2012 team.