



My name is Zenju Earthlyn Manuel. And I have always loved poetry,

Even if I don't understand every word as the poet meant it, there is this feeling inside my bones that delivers a wordless wisdom. The poet is sharing with growing up in Los Angeles, a rat race of urban sprawl, poetry was the oasis, the island, the paradise in which I could linger and taste the intangible sweet nectar. Poetry was my sweet spot. In this podcast. I share with you the poem of Amanda Gorman. We experienced her soul, as she spoke at the inauguration of president elect Joe Biden. She herself was poetry delivered and yellow with a hint of red. I sat down later to savor the nectar of her words, to look more deeply at what message was she bringing.

The Hill We Climb by U.S. youth poet Laureate, Amanda Gorman.

When day breaks, we ask ourselves, where can we find light in this never ending shade, the loss we carry a sea we must wade. We've braved the belly of the beast. We've learned that quiet. Is it always peace? And the norms and notions of what just is, is it always justice? And yet the dawn is ours before we do it. Somehow we do it, somehow, we've weathered and witnessed a nation that isn't broken, but simply unfinished. We, the successors of a country and a time where a skinny black girl descended from slaves and raised by a single mother can dream of becoming president only to find herself reciting for one. And yes, we are far from polished, far from pristine, but that doesn't mean we are striving to form a union that is perfect. We are striving to forge a union with purpose, to compose a country, committed to all cultures, colors, characters, and conditions of man. And so we lifted our gazes, not to what stands between us, but what stands before us? We close the divide because we know to put our future first. We must first put our differences aside. We lay down our arms so we can reach out our arms to one another.

We seek harm to none in harmony for all. Let the globe, if nothing else say, this is true. That even as we grieved, we grew, that even as we hurt we hoped, that even as we tired, we tried, that we'll forever be tied together. [Podcaster repeats -That we'll forever be tied together], victorious. Not because we will never again, know defeat, but because we will never again sow division.

Scripture tells us to envision that everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree and no one shall make them afraid. If we're to live up to our own time, then victory won't lie in the blade. But in all the bridges we've made, that is the promise to glade the hill we climb. If only we dare.

It's because being American is more than a pride we inherit. It's the past we step into and how we repair it.

We've seen a force that would shatter our nation rather than share it. Would destroy our country if it meant delaying democracy. And this effort very nearly succeeded. But while democracy can be periodically delayed, it can never be permanently defeated. In this truth, in this faith we trust. For while we have our eyes on the future, history has its eyes on us. This is the era of just redemption we feared at its inception. We did not feel prepared to be the heirs of such a terrifying hour, but within it, we found the power to author, a new chapter. To offer hope and laughter to ourselves.

While once we asked, how could we possibly prevail catastrophe? now we assert, How could catastrophe possibly prevail over us? We will not march back to what was, but move to what shall be. A country that is bruised, but whole benevolent, but bold, fierce, and free. We will not be turned around or interrupted by intimidation because we know our inaction and inertia will be the inheritance of the next generation. Our blunders become their burdens. But one thing is certain. If we merge mercy with might and might with right, then love becomes our legacy and change our children's birthright. So let us leave behind a country better than the one we were left with. Every breath from my bronze-pounded chest , will raise this wounded world into a wondrous one. We will rise from the gold-limbed Hills of the West. We will rise from the wind swept Northeast, where our forefathers first realized revolution. We will rise from the lake-rimmed cities of the midwestern states. We will rise from the sun baked South. We will rebuild, reconcile and recover. And every known nook of our nation and every corner called our country, our people diverse and beautiful will emerge, battered and beautiful. When day comes, we step out of the shade, a flame and unafraid, the new dawn blooms as we free it for. There is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it, if only we're brave enough to be it .

Gorman's poem is Influenced by the ongoing murders of black people of the times, the overrun of the Capitol building the heightened white supremacy, but she does not use any of these words. She chooses to applaud us for braving the belly of the beast and challenges, our notions of peace. That it is not quiet peace, not quiet. And what just is, isn't always justice, a nation that isn't broken, but I'm finished all of this resonated with me because often times in Buddhist language we are being with just is. And sometimes that can be a problem. If we think that there's no need to pay attention to justice or injustices. So things are just is, but it isn't always justice. Our nation isn't broken, but unfinished, which allows us to be in this process, constant process, this constant human project. I tried to imagine the poem being read without seeing our hearing Amanda Gorman, but it was impossible. So the poem was ultimately, Amanda, the poem is alive and breathing and walking and talking itself. It may be called the Hill We Climb, but it's Amanda that is walking us in this poem. It is a speech. It is her speech, her wise speech.

And yet she makes it possible for us to embody the poem by creating a rhythmic trance with rhyme and reason so that our hearts are open to her message. Very beautiful. She is a black woman and I would suspect a Christian one as she uses the word scripture. And she uses it as a prescription for envisioning and alleviating fear in this country. In this way, the poem lands squarely in the black tradition of liberatory poetics and that it is both spiritual and political. It is preached and it is sung.

There is a prayer and there is hope. It is her inclusion of all beings, no harm, harmony, sowing, seeds of transformation and change for the children for the future that resonated with me. It is where anyone of any religion or no religion can enter the world. She is calling forth.

She is in my view following the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. Almost even up to King's constant use of the word, "man," when she speaks of the conditions of man for all humanity using that word, that is, that is very much in the language of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and of the times in which, gender, many genders, were not acknowledged.

And I was especially drawn to Gorman's view of light. It is not the light that doesn't arrive from darkness. It is a light that exists despite of, and because of darkness, the dark times, the difficulty is on purpose is part of life. It is for our growth strengthening and understanding of what we have done and will do. Her light is not one manufactured in her mind or one that has been written down or that is even in our own minds. But yet it exists. She's asking us if only we knew this light that we know this light. She says, "The new dawn has been seeded and ready to bloom. If we let it, if we free it, for there is always light if only we're brave enough to see it, if only we're brave enough to be it."

"The new dawn has been seeded and ready to bloom, if we let it. If we free it. For there is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it, if only we're brave enough to be it. You have been listening to all. Life is poetry. Thank you for joining me. Please sign up for my newsletter@zenju.org.