



“THE HILL WE CLIMB”

A Poem given by Ms. Amanda Gorman, Youth National Poet Laureate, at the Inauguration of President Joseph Biden

January 20, 2021

Mr. President, Dr. Biden, Madam Vice President, Mr. Emhoff, Americans, and the world: When day comes, 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 isn't always peace. And the norms and notions of what just is isn't always justice. And yet the dawn is ours before we knew 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 our union with purpose. To compose a country committed to all cultures, colors, characters, and conditions of man.

And so we lift 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 and 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 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, 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. So while once we asked, 'how could we possibly prevail over 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 enaction 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 in 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, we 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 winds swept north, east where our forefathers first realized revolution. We will rise from the lake-rinsed cities of the midwestern states. We will rise from the sunbaked South. We will rebuild, reconcile, and recover in 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, aflame 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."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZ055ilIiN4>