

Our Birth was glorious.

*We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.*

Violent.

*When these Rights are dismissed by a Prince ill-versed in the dictates of natural Law, it is the Prerogative of the People to cast off the Chains which bind them to that Tyrant and institute new Government.*

As we tore ourselves from our mother's Womb.

*The British Crown has no longer the consent of the Governed. The Governed, who have had their Labor stolen by unjust Tax and their Liberty stifled by unjust Law; the Governed, who have been treated not as Subjects but as Objects.*

We were given a Name — or rather, gave ourselves one.

*We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.*

And took our first breath. As One.

*E Pluribus Unum.*

Childhood came with its challenges. Orphaned from birth, stranded in a New World, survival was a struggle.

*We cannot conquer this continent alone, though it is ours by Providence and manifest destiny.*

But in our past, we found our future, and with the inheritance of our forebears, we bought our prosperity.

*The Court rules that the Constitution recognizes slaves as property, undeserving of the blessings of liberty.*

They were not of us, though they were for us; we clung to them tight as we learned to crawl and walk and run.

*We find that a slave — even freed — is not one of the 'People of the United States'. Congress has no right to cast off the chains of the enslaved negro any more than it has the right to unchain any other beast of labor.*

To soar.

*The institution of slavery is the greatest material interest of the world, and its labor has become a necessity of commerce.*

But, like the Daedalus of antiquity, we discovered too late the follies of our hubris.

*Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.*

We fell, our bones fracturing as we fractured.

*Now, we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so dedicated, can long endure.*

Lying there, broken, we fought against ourselves to arise once more when all we wanted was to fade away into that good night.

*And endure we must, for the brave men who gave their lives so that their nation might live must not be allowed to have died in vain.*

With the dawn came our salvation. As we healed, we realized we did not need them anymore. We had outgrown them. Grown up.

*If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong.*

And so, we grew.

*We the people of the United States proclaim that all persons held as slaves are, and henceforward shall be, free.*

At the epilogue of our adolescence, we came to a fork in the road: two paths, separate but equal in their fortunes.

*The Court holds that the enforced separation of the races neither abridges the privileges or immunities of the colored man nor denies him the equal protection of the laws.*

Some of us went one way, leaving the other to the Other.

*We think such separation, be that in schooling or transportation, entails the inferiority of one race only insofar as the colored race construes it to be.*

But as we traipsed towards tomorrow, tandem turned to turmoil.

*We are colored in a colorless world. We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.*

Waterlogged timber groaned under our weight as we jostled one another in their Stygian confines. We sailed adrift, the ideals which had kept us afloat reduced to nought but protestations.

*America has defaulted on her debt to her citizens of color.*

And soon, even they failed.

*The bank of justice is bankrupt.*

We sank into that final, gentle, vicious embrace, and then, there was nothing left, save for the shadow of a dream...

*We have a dream that our children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.*

We opened our eyes to the glare of sterile lights.

*A dream that these United States of America will one day truly be united in the belief that all people, no matter the color of their skin, are created equal.*

We were lucky to be alive, they told us.

*A dream of hope. Of faith. Of justice.*

We vowed to do better. Never again.

*We the people of the United States hereby sign this Civil Rights Act into law.*

And so, we consecrated ourselves to our redemption.

*We the people nominate the first African American to the Supreme Court of the United States.*

Martyred ourselves.

*We the people elect the first African American woman to the Congress of the United States.*

Until we were reborn.

*We the people elect the first African American to the office of President of the United States, and trust he will, to the best of his ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States.*

We didn't think it would be serious.

*We laughed. We cried. We howled in anger. We sang in relief.*

The ephemeral cough of a schoolboy, gone as quickly as it came.

*"Our union is not yet perfect. But we are getting closer."*

Instead, it was the gasp of a veteran on his deathbed.

*We the people of the United States watch as Trayvon Martin is shot to death. He was seventeen.*

"Genetic," they said. Our Original Sin, come back to haunt us.

*We the people acquit George Zimmerman of the murder of Trayvon Martin.*

The true inheritance of our forebears.

*We the people watch as Michael Brown is shot to death. He was eighteen.*

*Watch as Laquan McDonald is shot to death. He was seventeen.*

*As Tamir Rice is shot to death. He was twelve.*

*As Walter Scott is shot to death.*

*As Freddie Gray is shot.*

*Philando Castile.*

*Breonna Taylor.*

*Alton Sterling.*

*George Floyd.*

May our death be as glorious as our life.

*We the people of the United States can't breathe.*