

Word
SOUND
Power

In the Classroom

2021 Anthology

Word. Sound. Power. in the Classroom

is BAM's in-school poetry residency for high school students. Each year students explore the art of poetry and spoken word through a chosen theme inspired by history and current events.

Over the course of 12 sessions, these young poets found inspiration and cultivated their own love for the written and spoken word. This anthology reflects that sense of discovery and serves as a culminating document of the students' participation in the class.

Word. Sound. Power. in the Classroom Teaching Artists

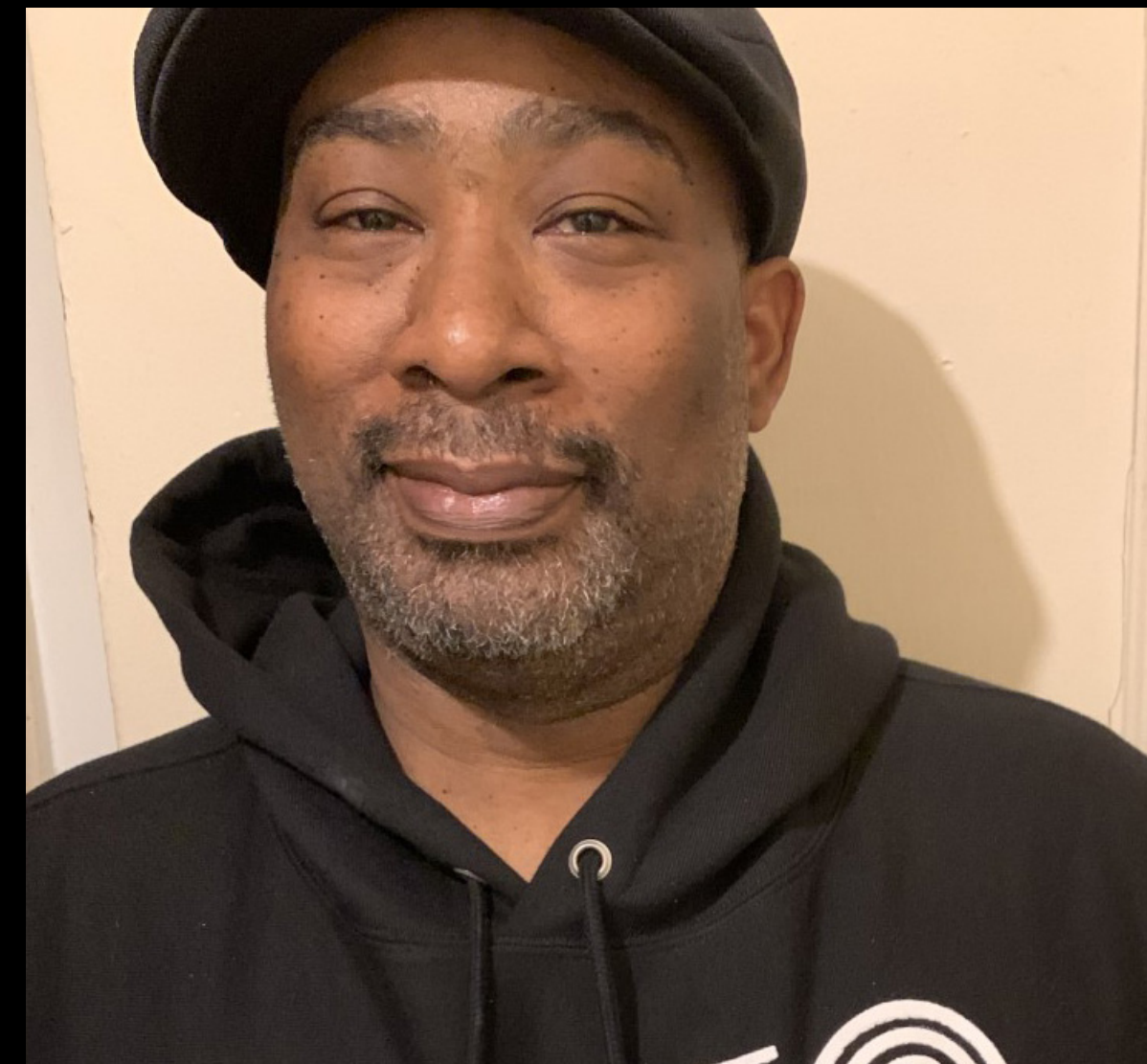


Jennifer Cendana Armas

Jennifer Cendana Armas is a performing artist and community worker born and raised in New York City. Her work has been featured at the Smithsonian Institution, The Public Theater, and Lincoln Center, among others. Armas has performed, taught, and facilitated workshops in schools, community centers, prisons, and shelters globally. junipersupadupa.com

Marcus Smalls

Marcus Smalls is a writer who uses his lifelong love of hip-hop to moderate creative environments around spirituality and identity. He has been a writer in residence at Teachers & Writers Collaborative and a fellow at Bronx Council on the Arts, and is the recipient of the 2021 St. Luke's Alumni Artistic Achievement Award. He is currently an editor for the Journal of Hip Hop Studies and is currently at work on his debut YA novel *The Divine Sinner Chronicles*.





Sankofa Remixed

March 2020 was the beginning of nothing ever being the same again. What we now know as a global pandemic literally shut down life as we all know it. For young people especially, the routine of school and the freedom to see friends and enjoy the world around them changed in an instant. For the remainder of that school year BAM's programming was put on pause. Fast forward to the fall of 2020 and we are all adapting. We have been able to connect with students in the virtual classroom, and we knew from the start they'd have so much to say.

The world is changing all around us. What is the world that you want to see? In this year's *Word. Sound. Power. in the Classroom*, led by BAM Teaching Artists Marcus Smalls and Jennifer Cendaña Armas, we asked students to imagine and explore where they've been, where they are now, and where they want to go—through the power of hip-hop poetry.

This is Sankofa Remixed!

Mikal Amin Lee
*BAM Education Manager
and Word. Sound. Power. Programmer*



Brooklyn

Teaching Artist:
Marcus Smalls

Teachers:
Qiana Spellman
Stacey Bancone

Preparatory

High School

Akera Joseph, 18

Ode to Your Name

I hear your name
In the echoes of my sleep
In the chaos surrounding me
I hear your name
Reminding me that trust isn't always a must
And just because my heart swells to the point of combust
I don't have to act on it
When I hear your name
I no longer need you near me
Because I heard you clearly
When you didn't treat me fairly
Though I know your name
It's inked on the body of a previous me
Who held you dearly
Wanting to keep you permanently
With all due transparency
I won't let the crashing oceans of pain
Stain my heart
There's no disdain on my part
Don't get me mistaken
This is not an emotion awaken
My feelings will never be the same
When I hear your name

Akera Joseph, 18

Ego Tripping

I'm unhideable
My looks aren't subtle
A stallion is printed on my canvas
A body that takes more room than my bellowing voice
With marks that stretch as wide as the ocean
Skin adorned in ebony
And a crown of hair fit for Aphrodite
My beauty is undeniable
And it makes me unhideable
It makes me a topic of envy
Being that confidence exudes from me
You can see it in the way that I walk
The way that I talk
The swing in my hips
And the purse of my lips
I'm unhideable
But that doesn't mean it's all
Sugar plum and rainbows
Someone always wants something
That's the way it goes
They want eat away at the beauty I hold inside
That happiness and love that allows to sleep at night
But that all apart of being unhideable

Devin Melendez, 16

Dear white America, what is the country we live in. Dear white America, if you were a feeling it would be animosity. New York is a city that never sleeps. The city that light shines on forever. But why is it so dark? Everyone is trying to outdo the other. People's hearts in america are so impure. The world is a dog eat dog but in new york it's like new yorker kills new yorker. We minorities make up most of the population and still allow them to white wash us. We have the power to push judges out of courts, sheriffs out of the force, cops out of the station. But we do things so dumb so slow. I am a child that sees the world in a man's eyes. My people blacks, latinos break our backs and take the shit white people dump on us. We get terrorized, we get beat and chased by police. Taken from our mothers by ice we go missing by our own military killing us. Dear white america what did we do? What caused the racism, the killing of blacks, the kidnapping of hispanics. Dear white america you turned us against our own people. Putting drugs, guns and money in the hood while making rivalries between streets, blocks buildings. Dear white America, why do you make us kill each other and why do you cause the hate. You make yourselves look like heroes but raise villains and put tyrants in office.

I was born into a world full of animosity. Where countries fight for power and civilians fight for freedom. Where black and spanish men fear to go outside and get stopped by a blue or killed by a hooded one. Grew up in a city that never sleeps so we strive to be successful so we can sleep. In your own eyes you are the king or queen but you believe this with no legacy to leave behind no name

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Devin Melendez, 16

to be remembered. I don't want to be king in my world. I want to be god where people praise all over the world for something I did. I want to be the one who brung out and defeated the devils in this world to make us better to save the world we live in so they roar my name forever. Why can't we all have the same ideal we all want better but don't do better. I live in the ghetto where we kill each other instead of heal each other where we went from hanging on the playground squashing bugs to selling and using drugs from drugs to slugs in someone's chest. where boys have to make the hardest decision of their life to become a "man" early and fight for a country that don't even want to really keep them alive they just recruit you to sign in your death wish and if you make it back home it's just a woo-hoo to get that one day of praise a year.

Erika Lagua, 15

At night it's so quiet
At night you feel so alone
At night you see nothing but the stars in the sky
At night you get to feel the breeze brushing against your skin
At night you feel calm

I pledge allegiance to my mother
such a hard worker
Went through so much
A pure soul
I pledge allegiance to my father who went through so much
Broke his bones from working and got covid
and was on the verge of dying
But thanks to god, you made it out alive
I pledge allegiance to my sister
So annoying but filled up with so much joy
Always seems to be smiling
even when her day is not going how she wanted it to go
Makes me feel happy when i'm feeling down
I pledge allegiance to my best friends
For being there for me through everything
Being by my side since the beginning
So much ups and downs yet we still made it till this day
I pledge allegiance to life itself

Erika Laguna, 15

love
i hate you so much
i don't like the way you make me feel
you make me feel weird
why does it hurt so much i just don't understand
i'm too young for this
you get me so distracted
my head gets all over the place
i don't want to care this much
please stop
leave me alone

School is so stressful
School has me up by 8 in the morning with no energy
School makes me want to cry
School makes me want to scream
School gives all these assignments each minute, I can't keep up
School isn't even about learning anymore, it's about due at 11:59
School takes my smile away
School takes all my energy away
School is all that but will be helpful for me in future

I was born in brooklyn
to be more specific, bushwick
drug dealers around the corners
some kids not even adults

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Erika Lagua, 15

getting money illegally as a result
had so much potential, what happened?
while the rest are napping
getting ready to school and receive their education
i was shy back in grade school
not talk at all and close myself up from others
but throughout the years that has changed
i met people who i am became friends with
help me get out of comfort zone,
be more confident and gain more friends
and I will forever be thankful for that
i hope everyone who was just like how I was
gets to find people who will help them become a better person
and help them grow

Kevyn Ramnath Niles, 15

Borders exist within people
People make rules
People make laws
People make everything
The people shape who you are as a person
The people are watching over you without you knowing
dissecting you
judging your mistakes
The people are strong
The people are powerful
The people are hungry
The people make laws to watch you fail
They force you into situations you can't get out of
The people don't sleep
The people don't see
"Potential is invisible to me"
The people have no emotion
The people have no joy
The people have no heart
The people make the borders and that's where you will start.

I pledge allegiance to myself
For making it this far
For the decisions I made
And life in general

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Kevyn Ramnath Niles, 15

I pledge allegiance to peace
Being the quiet
Who tries not to get anybody mad
Who nobody really appreciates or notices

I pledge allegiance to still being here
Even though I don't want to
Still put my best foot forward
Knowing the rewards I will get

I pledge allegiance to being happy
To being by myself and still feeling some type of joy
To no checkups and still being alright

To being broken
And picking myself back up
Because the earth doesn't revolve around me
Because friends aren't everything

Melanie Maldonado, 17

Dear White America

Are we not the same? We breathe the same air, we drink the same water, are we not the same? You say you are better, you have more power, but can't we do everything you can? And even more? Families are killed, ancestors are killed, because you are mad at us for being skilled. Propaganda saying he was armed, yet he was only going for a walk. "Separate but equal" you said, but when are we really treated equal? Civil rights movement repeated, always trying to defeat us, instead of being with us. Why don't you want to improve the future? Why repeat history? Sankofa. Race does not define someone? But that is the only question we all ever get asked. Our skins made the same, we bleed the same, but you choose tones to have us be viewed differently. Our anger, angers you. You are afraid of someone being better, but do you not think about how we feel? What makes you better? Beaten, shot, attacked, silenced, covered up, imprisoned. Are these words ringing any bells? This is what you do. Do you still think you're better?

Melanie Maldonado, 17

Fire: Police Brutality

With one spark, I can cause fear
I can hurt so quickly,
I can get away with it
It's hard to burn me out, no matter how much you try
My flames give me power, I can make you cry
I cause pain to so many,
I hurt innocent people
I cause trouble, I raise evil

Angelica Flores, 15

Ego Trippin

The greatness that is instilled in me visualizes what is beyond anyone's dreams. Those visions of large rivers and meadows and acres of land all that I see will belong to me...Land so large My home and my business will all be in my own private community. My success will rise above the skies but my heart will remain at bay because although I may reach that great destiny I will always be reminded of where this dream was meant to be. Although once a shy silly dream once it become reality i know it was always meet for me

Camila Fermin, 15

Dear Restraint,
the very thing that sets me back from spreading my wings
I see you everywhere.
Theirs the door, could you finally just leave already?
I just need freedom
Everywhere I am I feel trapped
in a box with no doors just windows
with no availability to get up and leave
you have me tied to the ground.
When will I look back and think
I did that.

I pledge allegiance to
The sacred family car rides
I pledge to me and my besties Wendy's dates
I pledge to the nights where my comforters
and bedding made me feel
Extra safe
I pledge to all the facetime calls and the Netflix nights
I pledge allegiance to days where I felt God's presence the most
The days where peace washed over me
The days where they were the hardest
The days where I actually felt free
I pledge to the people that haven't left
To the people that have stuck by me

Evelyn Chadan, 17

The world's creation

The shine on my eyes defines
The worthy I am
but behind everything, there is broken glass of hope
waiting to see if I can reconstruct my hope
My lips speak out my thought and ideas
I believe the world gives all the traits
but you are the one to choose to be those traits.
The connection between the outside world and myself
brings the best of me
I can be myself with the people I love!!!!

Hailey Almonte, 16

Dear White America,

You'd think I'd have nothing to fear because I am White passing. But imagine having Black and Black passing loved ones who have it way worse than you just because they are not White? Imagine all the people you love, dealing with Black struggles? The Black woman, who has the lowest self esteem, has it the worst. When will you appreciate Non White beauty? I only receive 25% of the struggle for having 3C and 4A textured hair, and my hair is a blessing in my eyes but it's a curse to others. Imagine being a little girl getting told by your family that your hair is ugly and that you have "bad hair". And those insults haunt you for the rest of your life. No matter how much you love your hair, when you have hair like mine, those words will haunt you for a long time. Imagine men not wanting you because they don't want a "nappy headed child". Imagine your family questioning why you didn't come out with your father's straight hair. I get fetishized in my family for my White features yet I get put down for my Blackest feature. And most of these insults come from my mother's side. The side of which I got my hair from. The people that your people decided to put down and brainwash. You have brainwashed my aunts, and my grandmother, and my mother, by telling them they are ugly for not looking White. These are the types of struggles that Black women and even Biracial women have to deal with, yet Black women still have it way worse than I do. Our own blood makes a huge deal out of which girl has the lightest skin tone and the loosest hair texture and the smallest nose because of you. Black women get rejected by their

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Hailey Almonte, 16

own men because of you. Black men choose White women over Black women. Why? Because you brainwashed Black men too. Not that there's anything wrong with wanting to date outside your race. But most Black men put Black women down in the process of it. So please. I beg that you stop tearing down Afrocentric features. Please uplift Black women and let them know that all their Black features are unique and perfect.

Sincerely, Hailey Almonte

Hailey Almonte, 16

What is the stupidest form of hate?
It's when you harass and discriminate
Not a single human gets to choose their gender or race
So what if she's Muslim?
Get off her case
I stay worrying about how this hate affects the future
'Cause people still fight over religion and race
People still say the slurs for the click bait
There isn't love in the air
Instead there is hate
It is polluting the air we breathe in and take
Hate is a disease that makes you foolish and fake
Will America be like this in 2058?
Will there still be any racists that I have to bake?
We all bleed the same red within our bodies and face"
The oppressed reach the highest for the highest of stars
They reach higher 'cause they know struggle and
have the biggest of hearts
The oppressed put in the most work, they're never stuck at the start
You have a complex mind when what you went through was dark
We always find a light to fight what keeps us stuck in the dark
Even if we get put down, we still forgive with our hearts
Because when you forgive and reach high you drowning in smarts
Don't underestimate the oppressed who have been through a lot

Hailey Almonte, 16

I pledge allegiance to to my soulmates
To the ones that had my back since my first day
To the ones who are broken and cry at night when it's late
To the ones who spread love instead of gossip and hate
If there is a culture you ignorantly appropriate
Please do your research or I will be quick to educate
I stand with every race, religion, trans and gay
The natives don't rule their own country because racism steals and
takes That is an important example of one who oppresses and
appropriates We all boast and argue so much
about who appropriates
Yet many keep a blind eye for the our own and the oppressors' sake
When it comes to groups y'all aren't apart of, y'all are some flakes
Especially when you're oppressed and you hate
You fight for support but when you discriminate,
You just look like a hypocritical fake
You'll get no where if you spread the oppressor's hate

Boundaries are what keep us attached
Not respecting each others morals is what keeps us detached
I'm not like you and you're not like me
In all seriousness, I keep my word so please respect that
The higher your expectations, the more I disappoint, man
If i'm not what you fantasize and want, I disappoint that
So please, respect my morals and i'll respect yours
If you can do that, we can be friends and so much more

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Hailey Almonte, 16

My vessel is temporary

My mind and spirit is permanent

After each life, my spirit gains more knowledge and peace

My spirit is evolving and the last stage

is going to heaven and peace

My mind observes drama and negativity, but doesn't feed.

I'm grateful for the human experience and for being me

I am a sinner but my hope is stronger and I still believe

That I will save millions of lives before my spirit leaves

Jordan Francis, 14

Born in Brooklyn, I had high hopes from a young age. Watching basketball from young, people designing buildings and creating cars, all I could think of was “I want to be like that”. Like that meaning I’m helping the society, whether the form of entertaining or helping out the agriculture, being a cause in the evolution of technology, building houses people would live their lives in, I wanted to be a part of it. As I grow up I still wish to have a future the same I dreamed of at a young age, to be able to tell my family what I did that is now being used in modern society, what I made is being spread around the continent. My ego isn’t too big, but I do wish to fulfill things to quench my dreams

I pledge allegiance to the quiet gym as the basketball hits the floor.

To my friends that step on the court with me
as we forget everything else but basketball.

To my brothers that look up to me when I accomplish something, and
then try to copy it

I pledge allegiance to the sweet aroma of food
that spreads across the air, symbolizing my mothers delicious cooking
is almost done as I come home.

I pledge allegiance to the deli me and my friends usually rely on
for a quick food run

I pledge allegiance to brooklyn, my neighbourhood,
the hometown and friends I will never forget

I pledge allegiance to the iHop on Broadway
me and my family occasionally visit for years

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Jordan Francis, 14

I pledge allegiance to the same booth we're seated at
most of the time

Venezuela runs in my bloodline and although it's not one of the best
running countries out there, I pledge allegiance to the race that ties
me to my ancestors and family

I pledge allegiance to Barbados beautiful beaches and resorts,
the vacation country people visit and pay for, is where
my bloodline originates from

I choose familiar crowds, whether its family or friends,
I stick true to those who have been at my side
for as long as I can remember

I pledge allegiance to the motto "eat with those who
starved with you", when I do grow up and make it,

I won't forget anyone who truly helped me on my journey

I even have the number of the 2 teachers from middle and
elementary school that got me past all my bad behaviours and
detentions, and helped me become the better person I am now

The fact I skipped a grade, and was able to make it in basketball is
thanks to figures I'll repay when I get older

I pledge allegiance to myself, the only person who can truly beat me
is me, so instead of beating myself up I'll strive for greatness.

Nia Warner, 16

Water is another matter,
has no direction but its own bright grace,
runs through all imaginable colors,
In the sea-paths the shadows of night darkened
As if his liquid, loose retinue stay'd
Ling 'ring, and were of this steep place afraid;
The common pass
Where, clear as glass, Water.

Peel and core the apples; slice 1/4 inch thick.
I'll write a poem on it yet fun fact it makes me sick.
Heat 4 tablespoons butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat.
Oh aren't you waiting to eat.
Apple Pie Oh Apple Pie
For you I'd die

Literally.
Brush with the beaten egg and sprinkle with coarse sugar.
Crisp green apples almost wicked as a booger.
Cut a few slits in the top crust. Just slightly not too much.
Cover the edges with foil if they brown too quickly.
Or Cool on a rack. The ones who live for pie isn't it like crack?
Apple Pie oh Apple Pie for you they'll actually die



High School for Innovation in Advertising & Media

Teaching Artist:
Jennifer Cendaña Armas

Teachers:
Nilaab Daftani
Isaac Villa
Jennifer DeGennaro

Jenyah James

Feeling

You're going away
Far, far away
That's what I've been repeating
This dread
All the energy draining from my spirit

Sitting all alone in the quiet
I hear owls screeching
A family of ants communicating
Nothing can replace this huge ripped wound
The same way nothing can replace you

You will be missed

Anissa Fennell

My Reality

I believe in change
we all have the ability to mold society into what we believe
it should be
if I can't change others i can always change myself
It doesn't feel the best but we must welcome it with warm hugs
if you don't see change in your society, you aren't doing it right

I believe in equality
whether it is gender or ethnicity
imagine if we all got along, things would be so much fun
instead of being judged for our skin color or our looks
we would be praised for our accomplishments and talent

I believe in reality
there are people in poverty, those that live on the streets
there are people struggling mentally and physically while those
around them turn a blind eye
those that get jumped on the street or killed because of their
race or sexuality
this is our reality

As a kid who has no hope left for this dying world
How can I believe in change for the good when we live
Win this kind of society?

Mohamed Ghaleb

Letter To Myself

Ghaleb, understand life is still far from over.

Remember that it will not be easy.

There will be things to block you from your road to reach the Top.

Do not forget where you came from, Ghaleb. Life is a miracle and you have to make use of it to the best of your ability. God

is always with you. Turn to him if you're moving away from your path. Remember the way of life is not through money or objects. It is

through your Faith and Family.

Never lose the connections to the people You Love

Never lose your Parents and friends can be better than your own blood.

Be Careful of who you Trust. People change over time and you might change the people you love

Don't lose your way.

You are on the path for happiness, Ghaleb.

Your Ending Is at the top. Remember this

Warning: live your life to the fullest.

Be happy. Have no regrets. Don't lose your way.

Keep moving forward. Never give up.

Never look back at your past because you are your own King.

Anthony Hunter

Fear & Loss

Everyday, i don't feel the same
Exercising while my body starts to decay
Suffering from depression get worse and worse
I know i'm not the first
Cherish life Everyday, or you will not feel the same
Taking back something you already claimed,
And then put all of your accomplishments in their silver frame.
Have someone beside you
Someone who would never lie to you
Someone who is loyal to you
Protecting you from a silver blade
A person is looking out for you, making sure
You will not kill yourself , not even cut yourself

Life is a gift
Life is given to you

Kerron Phillip

Humanising

People look down on other people because of the way they look
They don't think about what they are saying
They just speak
They don't think about other people
They just think about themselves
They need to look at what is in the inside

Never be ashamed of self
Instead always be proud

Cuz people are alway humansing another only after something
bad happens

Goodness Obadofin

Dear Goodness,

Ok. So what you failed again. It is up to you if you want to stay down or pick yourself back up. You might feel you are at your worst ever but trust me, there are better days ahead. There is so much more to life than what you are going through right now. You can only get better. You have an endless amount of potential that you haven't even discovered yet. Continue to chase discipline. It is the key to life. People might not know the battles you have within yourself but, one day, you will look back at those battles and laugh! Only strong people survive in life, and to become strong you have to move through resistance. In this moment, it might feel like you're being broken down, but I want to tell you you are being built up. You aren't defined by your thoughts or challenges. You are defined by the way you approach them.

Continue to fight.
I believe in you!

Hasan Spencer

A World Of Free

While watching the birds fly
We realize limits are beyond the skies where
Freedom is not gifted but is a lifestyle:
We enjoy ourselves with festivities
As if we will live eternally
Criminal minds and wicked thoughts are extinct
Every second the days get better without a blink
A world of free
As free as can be

We triumph over obstacles as the day rises anew.

Ralphiline Marsseille

The World

The world is full of hate
But life is only what you make it out to be
We shouldn't live in fear of hatred, lies, animosity
Shouldn't have to be the person you think fits in this society
Be your own person
Be your own you
Don't be scared of what people think of you

You are great
You are special
Just pay attention
Look in the mirror
Embrace all your differences
The differences between you and every other person

You don't have to see what I see
Because what I see is a girl just like me
One that bleeds the same blood I bleed
One that feels emotions just like me
Who is beautiful just like me, don't you agree?
I don't need your opinion in all honesty
Because how you feel doesn't fit into my reality

Ralphine Marsseille

You are great

You are special

Just pay attention

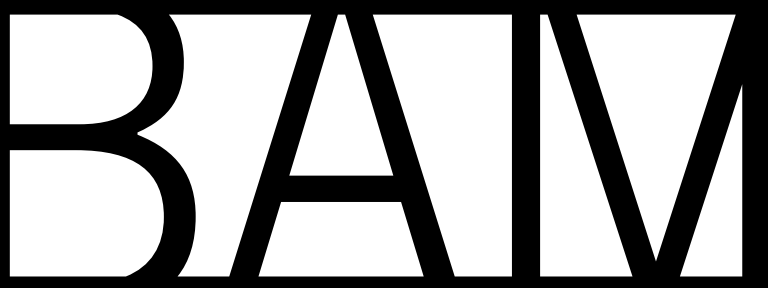
Look in the mirror

Embrace all your differences

The differences between you and every other person

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