

"FOUR POEMS"

By

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

This play is written to tell a story through spoken word. It is meant for ensemble work. The ensemble can be made up of a different cast or the characters on stage can be used during the times they aren't speaking. As the artists speak, it is encouraged that the ensemble tells their story through bodily movement and soundscape. It is also encouraged that if any music is used, it be music that wouldn't distract from the words of the artists. For example, versed music wouldn't be encouraged for this type of performance, however, music for viewpoints would be encouraged.

With love,
Taijee Bunch

CAST

Oppression- A gay male.

Fear- A black female. To portray a mother.

Boundaries- A hispanic female.

Healing- A black teen-aged male.

Ensemble of 2-3 (optional)

SCENE

The scene opens to a stage with lights lit on four stools. In walk four individuals from different areas of the backstage. FEAR, OPPRESSION, BOUNDARIES, and HEALING, all take their seats on the stage. The artists take a breath in unison and the scene begins with the sound of a missile preparing to hit the ground. It fades.

ALL

Oh say can you see?

BOUNDARIES

How our nation is stuck in an endless poverty.

ALL

A dawn's early light-

HEALING

That will never pierce through the darkness in our hearts and minds.

ALL

And the rockets red glare.

FEAR

And the bullet's red flare

ALL

The bombs bursting in air-

OPPRESSION

And bursting through the hearts of our loved ones.

ALL

Oh say does that Star Spangled Banner Yet Wave, Oh the land of the free, and the home of the brave.

The missile is heard again and fades. Oppression stands to deliver his message. He breathes and begins.

OPPRESSION

Oppression. I felt the touch of your hand one day and realized you weren't here to touch mine, but I still smiled. I smiled because I realized that no matter how far we are separated I know that I'll still be able to feel your hand. I'm haunted by your touch. Haunted with good memories that is. Though who am I to say that this feeling that I have for you was only built on the good. It was also the bad. It was

OPRESSION (CONT.)

built on the sleepless nights. It was built on the crying. It was built on the nights I wandered if I would see you in the morning. It was built in the struggles that life threw at us, but it was restored by the work. It was restored by the laughter in our voices. The warmth between our skins. The happiness in every tear. Then the joy in every shout. The compassion in your touch. It was maintained because I felt the touch of your hand one day and realized you weren't here to touch mine, but I still smiled.

These were the words I wrote to the love of my life before he lost his. He lost it to something that's familiar to us all. I met it once before. It first appeared when I choked on my words to tell my parents that their perfect little boy wasn't so perfect. That I fell in love with the devil as most of our nation would put it. The second time I met it was when the kids in my school tortured me for choosing to be who I was. It was closer to me that day. I finally met it when I was sitting in my room and staring at a bottle of my mom's medicine, but I decided to say good-bye to it that day and opened the closet doors that it controlled to hold me in. My love wasn't as strong as I was. He gave in to it, a familiar voice, a thing we called doubt. The opposite of hope. What we teach our children instead of telling them to have hope for the world and in ourselves.

My love locked me out. He closed himself off to everyone he knew. The first encounter didn't go well. They yelled at him and told him he wasn't the son they raised. The second encounter the kids told him he would go to hell. He would burn for being different. That he chose this life and was not born this way, and because of that they closed him off. So, he closed his door to his closet. An oppressed

OPPRESSION (CONT.)

place. An impenetrable place. Until it was too late. The door was opened, but there was no one to open it onto. I lost my love, but you shouldn't. No longer should we hide in the shadows they place for us. Instead we should bathe in the lights of hope and love and courage in who we are. We are here and we're not leaving.

The sound of the missile gets louder as it gets closer to hitting the ground. It fades. Oppression takes his seat as Fear stands to take his place. Fear breathes and begins.

FEAR

Fear. I shouldn't be afraid. Not me. What should I fear in a nation of the brave? The fearless. No why should I fear the dangers this nation continues to threaten me and people like me with? I am a black woman, and there is enough power in recognizing who I am to fight off any thought of fear. I stand on the backs of every black woman before me that stood to face fear in his eyes. She supports me in a world that doesn't understand me. I am filled with her gifts and knowledge that she's worked so hard for me to have. I have Maya's determination to see all that I am when others don't want to give me the light of day. I have Rosa's courage to refuse to give up my seat as an educated woman in a male dominated world. I have Harriet's guidance through the beaten tunnels and paths of freedom from both the struggles of my people and those that think they are above even me.

I live in a world of no respect. My very identity is taken away because of my skin tone and the different skin tones we share as black women. I'm looked at as being angry or nappy haired. A species of women that will always have many children to take care of, will probably live on food stamps and welfare, and will collect child support from a no-good man who never

FEAR (CONT.)

wanted kids to begin with; however, I strive knowing what my black mothers waned for me. I don't fear the words from the mouths of my generation because as they speak around me and behind my back, my mothers are speaking next to me and into my ear telling me to find my strength to make it in this world by learning from my mothers before me. That told me to know I'm more than just my body, my curves, my hips, my skin, my hair, and lips. That I can be a woman and be educated. That I can make this world a better place. That I can teach my children right and wrong. That it is okay to be angry damnit. I'm angry because the people around me have yet to realize their worth. I'm angry because I can raise my son right, educate him, give him proper love, pray for him, love him and be there for him, but there are still people in this world that believe that they have the right to take his life away! My baby! My blood! I'm angry that I can raise my daughter with self-respect and self-love, but there are men who believe that they can take advantage of her and stray her away from her life's learnings.

I'm angry because I can't have equal rights. I'm angry because there are people who try and tell me I'm living my life wrong, but can't tell me how to raise a family on \$15 worth of food stamps and inhumane hours of work. I'm angry because I'm constantly questioned by one side of people about my Intellect and capabilities and on the other side, I'm asked why do I speak white? Basically, I can't be an educated black woman in this nation, so excuse my anger. Excuse me for feeling that as a woman I must earn respect in this country instead of expecting it. Excuse me for feeling that as a black woman I must constantly fight for my people's rights to exist, when they are ungrateful to my hard work already. So,

FEAR (CONT.)

excuse me that I am a fighter, and I'll be damned if I'm supposed to fear anything this nation tries to throw at me. As a black woman, you better know I'm ready.

Fear takes her seat. Boundaries stands. The missile sounds continue and fade. Boundaries breathes and begins.

BOUNDARIES

Boundaries. Let's build a wall. Whenever you build a wall, however, you must make sure you have a strong foundation. You also must make sure you build it to its highest point so you can see the reflection of the hate that you've also built along with it. That's right the hate. We build walls to keep out the things we hate most. The things we don't want, but not until we get what we want out of them first. We set up these boundaries in our lives to protect ourselves and our families, but it also hurts us too. We gave this country generations of hard work. We work just as hard, and most times even harder. Just to be spat on and not even thought about in the end. To be called dirty because we don't have the same traditions. To automatically be deemed illegal because we possess these qualities that people look at and immediately think the worst of things.

Brother's and father's deported for doing what they hoped would be giving their family the best chance they could have. Mothers working harder than the average mother to put food on our tables and clothes on our backs and never asking for a dime of help from a crooked system in a crooked nation. Working hard to ensure that her children have an education that many children take for granted and making sure that hers don't follow in those children's footsteps. Paving the way for way for me to go out into the world and

BOUNDARIES (CONT)

create this change that America has worked so hard to say it doesn't need. I was taught that family is important, so I put in my work to ensure I do my mother justice. That I don't let my brother and father's sacrifices to be in vain. To continue to challenge this nation's motto of Home of the Brave and Land of the free. I want to ensure that it is possible for All peoples of all backgrounds can reach the promise of the great American dream. I will start by breaking down the walls of hate, of prejudice, of racism, of colorism, of homophobia, of sexism, and any other boundary that America has built a wall for. I have a road that led me to where I am today and I will work until my last breath for equality. The change is here, the time is now and I am ready.

Oppression sits. The missiles are heard once more but this time they hit the ground. Gun-shots and screams are heard. Healing stands and takes his place on stage. He breathes and begins to speak.

HEALING

Healing. So how do you heal in a nation that's already been broken beyond the point of healing? Take me for example. Did you forget about me? I was damned when I was born into this nation. My first breath of air was filled with hate and fear. You fear me because you don't have the courage to know me. To hear my voice and understand my message. Instead I'm expected to make two beds: one when I leave the hospital in my mother's arms and one that will be buried six feet under the dirt of every judgement that I will experience in my unknown life expectancy. Of course, this is potentially everyone's life's ending, but mine is promised with what I like to call unwanted statistics. Just like I was blessed to have a home to return to when I was welcomed to this earth, I was cursed with a cage that

HEALING (CONT.)

already had my name imprinted on its cold steel bars before I even received my chance to make something of myself in this world. These statistics also tell me that I will be dictated by the streets that I will live on, and because of that you will prejudge me, and because of that you will fear me. But you still don't have the courage to know me. Eventually I'll be talked down to with more prejudice and the snakes of racial slurs will slither their way into my life. It will happen because I choose to speak my mind, but no one will bother to listen. I'm told that all lives matter, but when I speak for my own and my brother's like mine, or I choose to stand up for our lives, mine is literally shot down. In cold blood. Of course, the bullet faces a double standard. My life is taken by those whose jobs are to protect and serve and by those who look just like me. Bang! I'm taken from my home! Bang! Everything my ancestors fought, bled, and died for ends. Bang! Told I'm no good! Bang! Killed my fathers! Bang! Took my children! Bang! Made me afraid to be me! Bang! Bang! Bang!

But I forgive you. Cock your weapons, aim, and fire and I will still forgive you. I move past the thought of coffins because I choose that my life is important enough to trudge through what's expected of life. Those silver bands of oppression will never touch these wrists because I choose my freedom. That air that I breathe will not be of hate, but of my mama's words that tell me I can in a nation that tells me I can't over and over and over and over again, in as many ways as possible. People will hear me because I accept the positives of my life that give me the strength to know that yes, all lives matter, but that doesn't make me forget that mine does too. Especially in a time where the killer can look just like me or

HEALING (CONT.)

*serve the purpose of protecting me.
You see I am my own motivator and because
I believe in my self-worth, my children
will believe in theirs and their
children's children plus seven generations
will surpass even me because they will
recognize their worth and have self-love
for themselves. They will believe they are
good because they will see me as good
because that is how I will see myself and
no matter how much shit and dirt that you
bury me under, I will forgive you!
Oppression, Fear, and Boundaries will
exist in our nation and we will take what
we will from these situations that we are
faced with. That's our purpose today. To
show you that no matter what America
faces, change is possible by looking
through each other's eyes. Let's reach the
Home of the brave and the land of the free
together. I asked you how can you heal in
a nation that is already broken beyond
healing? You simply close your eyes, and
breathe.*

*The group stands and breathe together as the light fades on
the stage. End.*