

MOTHER TO SON
BY LANGSTON HUGHES

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/88972/langston-hughes-101>

Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor—
Bare.
But all the time
I've been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's,
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now —
For I've still goin', honey,
I've still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair...

SONNET
BY JAMES WELDON JOHNSON

My heart be brave, and do not falter so,
Nor utter more that deep, despairing wail.
Thy way is very dark and drear I know,
But do not let thy strength and courage fail;
For certain as the raven-winged night
Is followed by the bright and blushing morn,
Thy coming morrow will be clear and bright;
'Tis darkest when the night is furthest worn.
Look up, and out, beyond, surrounding clouds,
And do not in thine own gross darkness grope,
Rise up, and casting off thy hind'ring shrouds,
Cling thou to this, and ever inspiring hope:
Tho' thick the battle and tho' fierce the fight,
There is a power making for the right.

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THE NEGRO SPEAKS OF RIVERS
BY LANGSTON HUGHES

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I've known rivers:
I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow
of human blood in human veins.
My soul has grown deep like the rivers.
I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went
down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy bosom
turn
all golden in the sunset.
I've known rivers:
Ancient, dusky rivers.
My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

THIS NOT A SMALL VOICE
BY SONIA SANCHEZ

This is not a small voice
you hear this is a large
voice coming out of these cities.
This is the voice of LaTanya.
Kadesha. Shaniqua. This
is the voice of Antoine.
Darryl. Shaquille.
Running over waters
navigating the hallways
of our schools spilling out
on the corners of our cities
and no epitaphs spill out of their river mouths.

This is not a small love
you hear this is a large
love, a passion for kissing learning
on its face.
This is a love that crowns the feet with hands that nourishes,
conceives, feels the water sails mends the children,
folds them inside our history where they
toast more than the flesh
where they suck the bones of the alphabet
and spit out closed vowels.
This is a love colored with iron and lace.
This is a love initialed Black Genius.

This is not a small voice
you hear.

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LOUD VOICES

BY APRIL WELLS

I used to be a stranger in my own body. There was once a time when this loud voice wasn't always so loud. I learned about slaves in elementary school, but it wasn't until middle school that I realized that this is my ancestry. I learned that I couldn't escape the color of my skin. I didn't understand why silence was in my blood, but just because my ancestors couldn't say anything didn't mean I wouldn't speak up for myself. It took a high school education for me to realize the beauty of my volume. They say that black people are meant to be loud, and that's okay because I have something to say. This voice has the ability to move mountains, soar like bald eagles, flow out of river's mouths. This can't be the land of the free and the home of the brave only for some. In history, we are taught black men dumb. Black men keep your mouths shut, but this is a loud voice and it's time to speak up. There is no excuse for choking a man in front of his children. There is no excuse for shooting a man with his arms up in the air. There is no excuse for shooting a man with his arms up in the air. There is no excuse for taking away one, more, voice. Today, I will be there voice. This is the voice of Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr., Trevon Martin, Erik Garner. This is a voice that will fill the prisons. This is a voice that will fill the graveyards. This is a voice that will shout. I am not a victim. I am not a victim! There will be no more excuses. This is a voice that will invite you to the revolution where all voices are needed in classrooms, behind mics, and in cities. So what are we going to do today. You see, we can no longer play the victim or the perpetrator. We have to be our own super hero, so put our volumes together, and learn how to fly. Bullets never have names on them, but gravestones always do. Sometimes it takes the right voice to get loud. Sometimes it takes one voice to find the others, but I promise it's been a long coming, but I know a change is gonna come.

<https://www.wattpad.com/244572416-writings-of-a-teenager-loud-voices-by-april-wells>