

Montclair Race Amity Day 2022 Spoken Word

The following texts demonstrate examples of interracial cooperation in service to community and nation. Let us put into action these powerful testimonies of race amity.

READING 1: *Hymn for the Hurting* | Amanda Gorman

Everything hurts,
Our hearts shadowed and strange,
Minds made muddied and mute.
We carry tragedy, terrifying and true.
And yet none of it is new;
We knew it as home,
As horror,
As heritage.
Even our children
Cannot be children,
Cannot be.
Everything hurts.
It's a hard time to be alive,
And even harder to stay that way.
We're burdened to live out these days,
While at the same time, blessed to outlive them.
This alarm is how we know
We must be altered —
That we must differ or die,
That we must triumph or try.
Thus while hate cannot be terminated,
It *can* be transformed
Into a love that lets us live.
May we not just grieve, but give:
May we not just ache, but act;
May our signed right to bear arms
Never blind our sight from shared harm;
May we choose our children over chaos.
May another innocent never be lost.
Maybe everything hurts,
Our hearts shadowed & strange.
But only when everything hurts
May everything change.

READING 2: *Songs of the People (1895)* | Frances Ellen Watkins Harper

Let me make the songs for the
people,
Songs for the old and
young;
Songs to stir like a
battle-cry Wherever they
are sung.

Not for the clashing of
sabres, For carnage nor
for strife;
But songs to thrill the hearts of
men With more abundant life.

Let me make the songs for the
weary, Amid life's fever and
fret,
Till hearts shall relax their
tension, And careworn brows
forget.

Let me sing for little
children, Before their
footsteps stray,
Sweet anthems of love and
duty, To float o'er life's
highway.

I would sing for the poor and
aged, When shadows dim their
sight;
Of the bright and restful
mansions, Where there shall be
no night.

Our world, so worn and
weary, Needs music, pure
and strong,
To hush the jangle and
discords Of sorrow, pain,
and wrong.

Music to soothe all its
sorrow, Till war and crime
shall cease;
And the hearts of men grown
tender Girdle the world with
peace.

Frances Ellen Watkins Harper was an African American abolitionist, suffragist, poet, teacher, public speaker, and writer.

READING 3: A Human Rights Speech (1951) | Eleanor Roosevelt

We must want our fellow human beings to have rights and freedoms which give them dignity and which will give them a sense that they are human beings that can walk the earth with their heads high and look all men in the face. If we observe these rights, for ourselves and for others, I think we will find that it is easier in the world to build peace because war destroys all human rights and freedoms, so in fighting for those we fight for peace.

READING 4: Quotes | Bayard Rustin

“My activism does not spring from being black. ... The racial justice that was present in the country during my youth was a challenge to my belief in the oneness of the human family.”

“We are all one - and if we don't know it, we will learn it the hard way.”

“...Loving your enemy is manifest in putting your arms not around the man but around the social situation, to take power from those who misuse it at which point they can become human too.”

Bayard Rustin was a pacifist, leader in the Congress of Racial Equality, mentor and speech-writer for Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and organizer of the 1963 March on Washington.

READING 5: Excerpts from “Race and Religion” (January 14th, 1963) | Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

Equality is an interpersonal relationship, involving both a claim and a recognition. My claim to equality has its logical basis in the recognition of my fellow men's identical claim. Do I not forfeit my own rights by denying to my fellow men the rights I claim for myself?

From the point of view of moral philosophy, it is our duty to have regard for every man.

What we need is a total mobilization of heart, intelligence, and wealth for the purpose of love and justice.

Daily we should take account and ask: What have I done today to alleviate the anguish, to mitigate the evil, to prevent humiliation?

Our concern must be expressed not symbolically, but literally; not only publicly, but also privately; not only occasionally, but regularly.

What we need is the involvement of every one of us as individuals. What we need is *restlessness*, a constant awareness of the monstrosity of injustice.

READING 6: *Excerpt from Address at the Hattiesburg, MS Freedom Day Rally (January 21st, 1964) | Ella Baker*

We are not in the final stages of the freedom struggle. We are really just beginning. We are just beginning the freedom struggle. Let me tell you why. Because even tomorrow, if every vestige of racial discrimination were wiped out, if all of us became free enough to go down and to associate with all the people we wanted to associate, we still are not free.

...People cannot be free until they realize that peace—we can talk about peace—that peace is not the absence of war or struggle, it is the presence of justice.

Ella Baker was a civil rights activist and organizer.

READING 7: *Excerpts of Speeches and Writings | The 14th Dalai Lama*

The more we care for the happiness of others, the greater our own sense of well-being becomes.

Thus we can strive gradually to become more compassionate, that is we can develop both genuine sympathy for others' suffering and the will to help remove their pain. As a result, our own serenity and inner strength will increase.

Because we all share an identical need for love, it is possible to feel that anybody we meet, in whatever circumstances, is a brother or sister. No matter how new the face or how different the dress and behavior, there is no significant division between us and other people. It is foolish to dwell on external differences, because our basic natures are the same.

Ultimately, humanity is one and this small planet is our only home. If we are to protect this home of ours, each of us needs to experience a vivid sense of universal altruism. It is only this feeling that can remove the self-centered motives that cause people to deceive and misuse one another.

I believe that at every level of society - familial, tribal, national and international - the key to a happier and more successful world is the growth of compassion. We do not need to become religious, nor do we need to believe in an ideology. All that is necessary is for each of us to develop our good human qualities.

I try to treat whoever I meet as an old friend. This gives me a genuine feeling of happiness. It is the practice of compassion.

READING 8: *Quote from the 40th Anniversary of the Loving vs. Virginia Supreme Court Case (June 2007) | Mildred Loving*

“I believe all Americans, no matter their race, no matter their sex, no matter their sexual orientation, should have that same freedom to marry ... I am still not a political person, but I am proud that Richard’s and my name is on a court case that can help reinforce the love, the commitment, the fairness and the family that so many people, black or white, young or old, gay or straight, seek in life. I support the freedom to marry for all. That’s what Loving, and loving, are all about.”

The Loving vs. Virginia Supreme Court case made interracial marriages legal in the United States.

READING 9: *Excerpt from Speech at United Nations, New York City (2013) | Malala Yousafzai*

So here I stand, one girl among many.

I raise up my voice — not so that I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard.

Those who have fought for their rights:

Their right to live in peace. Their right to be treated with dignity. Their right to equality of opportunity. Their right to be educated.

This is the compassion that I have learnt from Muhammad — the prophet of mercy, Jesus Christ and Lord Buddha. This is the legacy of change that I have inherited from Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and Muhammad Ali Jinnah. This is the philosophy of non-violence that I have learnt from Gandhi Jee, Bacha Khan and Mother Teresa. And this is the forgiveness that I have learnt from my mother and father. This is what my soul is telling me, be peaceful and love everyone.

Malala Yousafzai is a human rights activist

READING 10: *Except from Speech (2015)* | Michael Higgins

'Reconciliation' is a word that implies so much. It contains whole constellations of stories, of histories, of individual and community experiences of loss, grief, pain and division, as the material to be transacted. Yet it also paradoxically suggests possibility, the possibility of human generosity and of a selfless willingness to find a way to accept – or at least to understand – the differences between us. It is a word that conveys a sense of hope, courage, forgiveness and grace. It assumes a belief that, despite all the hurt, there can be a way forward where the violence and the conflict of the past do not dictate our present, or foreclose on the possibilities of our future.

Michael Higgins is the President of Ireland.

READING 11: *Passages and Quotes* | Contributed by the Baha'i Community's Race Amity Task Force

The diversity in the human family should be the cause of love and harmony, as it is in music where many different notes blend together in the making of a perfect chord. If you meet those of different race and colour from yourself, do not mistrust them and withdraw yourself into your shell of conventionality, but rather be glad and show them kindness. Think of them as different coloured roses growing in the beautiful garden of humanity, and rejoice to be among them.

Do not be content with showing friendship in words alone, let your heart burn with loving kindness for all who may cross your path.

Ultimately, the power to transform the world is effected by love, love originating from the relationship with the divine, love ablaze among members of a community, love extended without restriction to every human being.

- Universal House of Justice (international governing body of the Baha'i community),
22 July 2020

The Baha'i Community's Race Amity Task Force is one of the organizers of Montclair Race Amity Day.

READING 11: *New Da's Lyric* | Amanda Gorman

May this be the day
We come together.
Mourning, we come to mend,
Withered, we come to weather,
Torn, we come to tend,

Battered, we come to better.
Tethered by this year of yearning,
We are learning
That though we weren't ready for this,
We have been readied by it.
We steadily vow that no matter
How we are weighed down,
We must always pave a way forward.

We heed this old spirit,
In a new day's lyric,
In our hearts, we hear it:
For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne.
Be bold, sang Time this year,
Be bold, sang Time,
For when you honor yesterday,
Tomorrow ye will find.
Know what we've fought
Need not be forgot nor for none.
It defines us, binds us as one,
Come over, join this day just begun.
For wherever we come together,
We will forever overcome.

READING 11: Excerpt from “Lift Every Voice and Sing” (1900)| James Weldon Johnson

Lift every voice and
sing Till earth and
heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of
Liberty; Let our rejoicing rise
High as the listening skies,
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has
taught us, Sing a song full of the hope that the present
has brought us. Facing the rising sun of our new day
begun,
Let us march on till victory is won.

James Weldon Johnson was an African American lawyer, poet, novelist, diplomat, and executive director of the NAACP). This poem was written to honor Abraham Lincoln's birthday and put to music by J. Rosamond Johnson.