

Letter of Gratitude to Messiah

Before Messiah Baptist church, I was broken. I did not know God for real. God to me was that long-lost relative who called the house from the islands asking about me. My response to the relative was, I do not know you; you are too far away to get close to. Who are you?

When I came to Messiah in 2014 that relative is who they taught me about through bible study. I'm not going to lie, after Mac and Wac, I'd see Deacon Linda put the food out and I was like whoa, that looks good. So I started to stay for the food that nourished my body, and then I elongated my stay for the bible study that nourished my soul. They taught me that as a black woman, I must always be hungry because this world will try to starve me of my talents and hang me dry for the devil to take.

They showed me what putting God first looks like, putting God first looks like two medals, a Silver in Vocal Contemporary and Gold in Poetry for my written work "A letter to #Marchforourlives" (enclosed for your reading pleasure), at the NAACP ACT-SO competition. It was work; and Deacon Cynthia's middle name is work, which is why I chose her as a mentor. Putting God first looks like getting almost a full ride - but close to it - to UMASS Dartmouth. Putting God first looks like racking up 6,000 dollars in scholarships with more coming my way. God is never finished. Putting God first looks like becoming Youth-of-the-Year at the Boys and Girls Club, a place where I have been going to for 12 plus years.

You see, no one sees the sweat, the prayers; the work that goes into the rewards I have gained. I didn't do this alone, God purposely puts people in your life for a reason; they are for growth and preparation of a battle. A battle in which I put my full armor on. I would like to thank, Mrs. Linda Ross, Miss. Cynthia, Miss Sharon, Mr. Miles and his wife Ms. Kathy, the other Mrs. Cathy and another mother Miss Rozita who helped me stay in tutoring for as long as I did, Epic Youth Group, Mac and Wac, Bible Study, Walker Choraliers, Deacons Howard and Thomas and the entire Messiah church family as a whole for helping me walk with Jesus.

Sincerely,
Adande Bien-Aime
Class of 2018

A letter to #Marchforourlives
By Adande Bien-Aime

I know you want to talk about Florida but, allow me to have my '09 MTV music awards, Kanye West moment and interrupt you.

March for white lives, I mean March for white lives,
I mean March for our lives, I'm happy for you and
Imma let you finish but, black lives matter has been for anti-gun violence for
years,
Y'all just started yesterday.
Today is not just your day, but ours as well.

You guys never loved us, and by us I mean black folks.
We were never seen as human enough in the first place, just ask the
slaves in the heaving bellies of slave ships.
Just ask the rusting chains that once held black wrists.
Just ask Jim crow, who crows while painted in black face.
Your media paints us as the inferior race.

We must count on ourselves, right?
It's as if black folks are born engineers.
The only race who program themselves to know when their own are gone,
the way black grandmothers know when their china breaks, or pass into
oblivion.
We are like china, we break or pass into oblivion.

You send your men to combat against us on the battlegrounds of the
ghettos, claiming that y'all Robin hood when y'all really robbing hoods.
Robbing hoods of our fathers, our brothers, and our sisters.
I would have come on this stage sooner, but you already forgot that our
people are not deemed important enough for you to care.
I guess that's why our black girls go M.I.A. in Washington.

It feels like, we not good enough to make the headlines of newspapers,
unless we are behind the barrel or in front of it.
When we do make the headlines, we are not heroes, but the cause of it.
Our baby pictures are at home, yet mugshots are the only photos that the
media can find,
because to y'all black folks only commit crime.

We have yet to do something about the killings of my sisters and brothers.
February 14 happened and suddenly, gun violence matters.
I will not apologize for how insensitive I sound,
but this isn't the first time you have made us angry.
Can you see that we are angry?
Or is our anger just another excuse to call us violent?

Violence is not the way that we proceed.
Learn not to judge the way people grieve.
Avoid pointing out our color which is just skin deep.

When blistering hot summers turn into battlefields at the drop of another
black boy,
Whoosh! Silenced by the wind, I mean bullet whizzing by,
KaBoom! KaBoom! KaBoom!
heartbeat drums of mothers, thump in grieving chests for sons and
daughters not their own.
They thump for the what ifs, and could ofs, in the present and future.

Kaboom! Kaboom! Kaboom!
Earthquake fingers hold imaginary cold corpses that once breathed life,
and whistled blues.
No one sees it coming, like soldiers with ptsd.
We must act like soldiers with ptsd.
When does March for our white lives, I mean March for our lives care?

When Robin's bullet pierces youthful brown skin, spilling scarlet red from
black bodies, the streets become canvases for black bodies.
And your police become our painters holding their paintbrush gun against
our temple.
Y'all love art.

Whoosh! Black people go like the wind, gone and sudden.
No one sees it coming, like soldiers with PTSD.
It's crazy how vocal white noise becomes when porcelain skin and ocean
blue eyes disappear, and spilling into your streets like milk are white
bodies,
white bodies that spill like scarlet blood from black bodies. Your streets
become masterpieces, and now everyone cares.

#Blacklivesmatter becomes no more.
#Blacklivesmatter is deemed too violent.
#Blacklivesmatter is not worth an Ariana performance.

March for Our Lives, becomes your version of scripture.
Something deemed innocent and much purer.
It is your white savior, a blue-eyed Jesus after resurrection.

"where are our black youth to recite their speeches"?
you know the answer.
11-year-old girls like Naomi Wadler know that their friends are being
plucked from the gardens of their community.

Did you think that when black girls go M.I.A in Washington, that it is merely
a disappearing act?
Apart of the show? I guess that's why we call black girls magic.
They disappear when we abra-ca-da-bra them gone.
March for white lives, I mean March for white lives,
I mean March for our lives, Imma let you finish but black lives matter have
been anti-gun violence for years, y'all just started yesterday.
I told you black folks go like the wind, gone and sudden.
Whoosh!