

This is for Us

This is for family trees that made us the butt of the joke...
we were waiting for the punch line and didn't realize we were it.

This is for generational trauma that misused, abused, confused, and simultaneously produced our
bloodlines.

We can't wear the skeletons hanging in our closets for fear they will resurrect and leave us
hanging in their place.

This is for our mamas who weren't mothered, weren't ready, weren't women, were girls getting
felt up and laid down by life.

This is for our daddies who didn't have dreams of fatherhood but wanted to be men and stumbled
upon daughters and sons trying to piece together their masculinity.

This is for surrogates, aunts, and grandmothers who raised us as if they'd birthed us or at least
did the best they could.

This is for the locked up, strung out, turned out, down and out uncles and cousins who we prayed
we'd never become--and for the ones who violated and victimized us in quiet corners who will
always be a part of us.

This is for our elders and ancestors not too far removed from one type of bondage before they
were thrust into another one with a new generation on their hips and breasts.

This is for us:

first generation college grads

(maybe high school),

first-time home buyers,

first to finish anything,

first to wait,

first to face our demons the same way they've been facing us since before we were born,

first to fight for our sanity in the crazy and messed up stock that bred us,

first to find fearlessness among all the frightened souls coursing through our veins.

This is us.

This is for us.

Dear Mama,

I am sorry to reduce you to symbol with this letter, but I must say I am afraid of becoming you. Afraid of waking up one day all scars, stitches, and memories pieced together just for the sake of being alive and not even realizing it.

Afraid of looking in the closet for something nice to wear and finding only rags and remnants of the person I used to be.

Afraid of looking in the mirror and having to almost drown in everyone else's eyes before I float back up to my own surface.

Mama,

I wish you knew how I quilt my dollars and dimes together and leave my credit cards at their limits just to escape the feeling of being indebted to myself.

I see money leave your hands before you have even counted it to know what you spent, and I know

you started abusing dollar signs and common sense just to feel some control again after my dad left you shards of broken glass and haphazard me in his absence.

Mom,

You have always called me first but loved me second.

Second to the baby who bled from you three months before my conception,

second to the son named Isaiah you thought you'd have once your blistered womb decided to grow me,

second to your gnawing unforgiveness toward the other fragment that sowed me,

second to your insatiable jonesin for money,

second to your asphyxiating cycle of instability,

second to your deeply rooted need to feel like you accomplished even half of what your childhood friends have,

second to your insecurities about your body, your face, your everything,

second to your fight to love you.

I am not angry.

I have been often, and we both know it passes.

My adulthood sometimes confronts your regression, and when the two look nothing like mother and daughter I have learned to articulate it and you call that disrespect.

I love you.

And I want you healed and whole,
careful and freed,

I want you saved from yourself
not for me

but so that the women yet unborn in me can one day take inventory of their bloodline and see that they inherited more than soft skin, brown eyes, and an undying desire to be but they also were given

the resilience, strength, and intelligence that my mother willed to me.