

# Unconditionally

I am in total awe of your love.  
For when I never knew you, you loved me anyway.  
I was selfish, thinking of myself, my needs, my wants.  
Like a baby, I cried to be fed, held, comforted  
Always you were there for me:  
Thank you for your presence.  
You were always close by  
Providing for my every need  
Giving in to my desires as they prove for my benefit.  
Even when I forget to say thank you,  
You still have mercy on me.  
Never leaving me or forsaking  
Me—even though I forsook you.  
Sometimes I get angry when  
I don't have my own way.

Didn't I say I hated you once?  
I didn't mean it—not even then.  
I know you aren't trying to ruin my  
life—or prevent me from having fun.  
But fun was more important to me then than the truth.

Now that I'm older, more mature,  
I understand that everything you  
Did to me, for me, with me  
Was simply because of your love—  
Your great love for me.  
I can feel in your actions that  
I was—still am loved.  
I can see in your face your  
Care. How you light up when  
I smile, how you feel  
Pain when I'm sad, how  
You feel my hurt as much  
As I do—maybe even more.  
And I notice. I notice your presence perpetually.  
I notice how others have been abandoned – left to  
Fend for themselves too soon.  
I notice how some have  
Felt lonely even though they weren't alone.

Then there were others who were

(continued)

Not yours—yet you took responsibility  
For them. Others whose shelters  
Were unreliable.

Thank you. Thank you for  
Always being there—for always  
Showing you care. For giving,  
Providing, for nurturing,  
Encouraging nothing but the best in me.  
I love you.

Unconditionally  
(Continued)

# Better Me

I am not a grape. I am no plum  
Turned into a raisin or prune.  
I have no wrinkle from the sun  
I am cotton, made whiter into warmth  
I am clay, baked to perfection.

I am not blown away by the wind  
I am no feather, over powered by the slightest gust  
I am a kite, rising above its every breath.  
I am an eagle soaring on its lift.

I struggle. You cannot break me.  
Obstacles don't defeat me ~ they give  
Me reason to fight.

I have no fear of the rain,  
Though it beats down on me relentlessly,  
I will drink it in and strengthen my roots. I will stand tall like an evergreen.

The flames will not consume me;  
I will come forth as pure gold.  
I will pass through the fire and not be burned.  
I am a diamond, polished, no longer rough.

No! The sun, wind, rain and fire  
Are making me better. They don't  
Harm me as you think. They don't  
Destroy me. They make me better.  
**THEY MAKE ME BETTER.**  
They take what I am and perfect me.

# **BLACKNESS**

**Is it Black to wear pants with the waists tied below the hips?  
Is it Black to utter profanity and the "N" word from the lips?  
Is it Blackness to tear our neighbors down?  
And steal from each other when no one's around?**

**Are we Black when we wear our hair matted in dreds?  
Are we Black when we choose hunger to buy designer threads?  
Are we Black because Roca Wear, Baby Phat and FUBU are stamped on what we wear?  
While we cannot tell the difference between they're, their and there?**

**No. None of those things are what makes us Black...  
Not what we say, what we do, or the clothes on our back.  
Black is the determination to rise despite being oppressed.  
It is lifting our voices to sing amidst efforts to have them suppressed.**

**Blackness is a heritage, a place we came from,  
Blackness is a journey our ancestors began.  
Blackness makes us yearn to grow,  
to experience places and accomplishments our parents don't know.**

**And all that remains is our Black History  
All that remains is a great victory.**

**Blackness is desire to make better our lot.  
to give to the community, our children more than we got.  
Blackness is pride in being in the image of God,  
He made no mistakes -- His purpose was not odd.**

**Blackness is striving to maximize what we can become.  
Blackness is not quitting until victory is won.  
Blackness is achieving that next higher goal.  
Blackness is nourishing both body and soul.**

**And all that remains is our Black History  
All that remains is a great victory.**

**Blackness is looking at what isn't and making it be.  
Blackness is working up to our potentiality.  
It is finding a way to make right a wrong.  
It is finding the courage through weakness to be strong.**

# Blackness (continued)

**If we work together in the community  
Take all the struggles and adversity  
And chip away at them continuously,  
The mountain will fade into obscurity.**

**Let's join together as Black and as proud!  
United in spirit, in heart, as one big crowd.  
And never rest until we break down those walls  
Of stereotype and meanness and laziness -- negativity -- don't stop till it falls**

**And all that remains is our Black History  
All that remains is a great victory.**

**Blackness is recognizing the contributions of those who came before.  
Blackness is Martin, Marcus, Malcolm... and many more.  
Rosa, Sojourner, Harriet Tubman and friends,  
Courageous soldiers, inventors, leaders showing struggle doesn't end.  
Until we remember the baton has been passed,  
Now it's our turn -- Blackness is ours at last.**

**It is doing what needs to be done in life  
It is putting away envy, bitterness and strife.  
Blackness is knowing I can fly fast and free.  
Blackness is looking into the mirror and seeing me.**

**Yes. All that remains is our Black History  
All that remains is our great victory.  
I have the baton now. To me it's been passed.  
Now it is my turn. I am Blackness at last.**

## Guilt Trip

I got a guilt trip.  
I fell for it.  
I got hurt.  
I got angry.  
I let it be known.  
And I cried.

I thought about it.  
I went there again,  
...on that trip.  
And I cried.

But I've come back now.  
And I vow  
I'll never return there.  
Don't give me the map.  
I don't want to send anyone else there either,  
Lest they too will cry.  
And feel pain;  
And be hurt;  
And I'll have gained nothing...  
Except a broken relationship,  
Ripped to pieces,  
Bandaged with sorries and regret.  
For words cannot be recalled or unspoken  
Once they sail into the air.

For now,  
I'm at the edge of regret,  
The bandages on this relationship are losing their stickiness;  
Patched with desire to block future hurt.  
Now, I've resolved to stand at a distance,  
To build a wall to keep out the pain.  
There will be no door,  
No slot to slip another ticket for that place called guilt,  
Filled with "you never" and "you always"...  
Forget it.  
I've unpacked my bags of appeasing and shame.  
Ended the giving and receiving of blame.  
For I am never, ever taking a guilt trip again.

## Beauty

Beauty is all around:

In the colors that dress the flowers,

And the matching birds lost in their glory,

In the vastness of the mountains,

And the deep dip of the valleys.

In the tiny ant,

Working together with the other ants in the colony.

In the detail of the hive,

In the drones and in the queen,

Busy producing the sweetness for which they are known.

In the flight of the eagle,

And the hawk,

And the dive of the seagull,

In the clouds,

And the water cycle—never interrupted,

And the wind that's not seen

But is everywhere.

And the never-ending horizon

That touches the sea

As it seems to fall off the end of the earth.

And in the sun;

The center of it all,

Smiling down as each particle,

Equipped with the knowledge of its duty,

Performs in sync as one.

And in the stillness of the night,

Not quite still as nocturnal creatures roam,

Taking over the jobs left undone

At the setting of the sun,

With its orange glow,

Mingled with yellows and reds.

And the moon,

Reflecting the light from the center,

Smiles too, as it juggles

The rays into beams,

Watching its companions in the dimness.

And in man, of course.

Created in God's image

With dominion over the land, and the beasts and the herbs.

Controlling with prowess

Or cowering in fear,

Building,

Tearing down,

Beauty. (continued)

Imitating nature,  
Preserving,  
Utilizing,  
Wasting,  
Conserving  
The resources given to him.  
In art, in music, in words...  
In service to each other.  
Returning as the cycle continues  
The chain, unbroken,  
A wonderful reality.  
And it is all around.  
It is beautiful.