

Mr. President, Madame Vice President, Americans, and the World:

When day comes, we ask ourselves:
Where can we find light
In this never-ending shade?
The loss we carry, a sea we must wade.

We've braved the belly of the beast.
We've learned that quiet isn't always peace,
And the norms and notions of what "just is"
Isn't always justice.

And yet the dawn is ours before we knew it.
Somehow, we do it.
Somehow, we've weathered and witnessed
A nation that isn't broken, but simply unfinished.

We, the successors of a country and a time,
Where a skinny black girl,
Descended from slaves and raised by a single mother,
Can dream of becoming president,
Only to find herself reciting for one.

And yes, we are far from polished, far from pristine.
But this doesn't mean we're striving to form a union that is perfect.
We are striving to forge our union with purpose,

To compose a country committed
To all cultures, colors, characters,
And conditions of man.
And so we lift our gazes not
To what stands between us,
But what stands before us.
We close the divide,
Because we know to put
Our future first, we must first
Put our differences aside.

We lay down our arms,
So that we can reach our arms out to one another.
We seek harm to none, and harmony for all.

Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true:
That even as we grieved, we grew,
That even as we hurt, we hoped,
That even as we tired, we tried.
That we'll forever be tied together. Victorious,
Not because we will never again know defeat,
But because we will never again sow division.

Scripture tells us to envision that:
“Everyone shall sit under their own vine, and fig tree,
And no one shall make them afraid.”
If we’re to live up to our own time, then victory
Won’t lie in the blade, but in all the bridges we’ve made.
That is the promised glade,
The hill we climb, if only we dare it:
Because being American is more than a pride we inherit—
It’s the past we step into, and how we repair it.

We’ve seen a force that would shatter our nation rather than share it,
Would destroy our country if it meant delaying democracy.
And this effort very nearly succeeded.
But while democracy can be periodically delayed,
It can never be permanently defeated.

In this truth, in this faith we trust.
For while we have our eyes on the future,
History has its eyes on us.

This is the era of just redemption.
We feared it, at its inception.
We did not feel prepared to be the heirs
Of such a terrifying hour.
But within it we’ve found the power
To author a new chapter,
To offer hope and laughter to ourselves.

So while once we asked: How could we possibly prevail over catastrophe?
Now we assert: How could catastrophe possibly prevail over us?

We will not march back to what was,
But move to what shall be:
A country that is bruised, but whole,
Benevolent but bold,
Fierce, and free.

We will not be turned around,
Or interrupted by intimidation,
Because we know our inaction and inertia
Will be the inheritance of the next generation.
Our blunders become their burdens.
But one thing is certain:
If we merge mercy with might, and might with right,
Then love becomes our legacy,
And change our children’s birthright.

So let us leave behind a country better than the one we were left.
With every breath from our bronze-pounded chests,

We will raise this wounded world into a wondrous one.
We will rise from the gold-limned hills of the west!
We will rise from the windswept northeast where our forefathers first realized revolution!
We will rise from the lake-rimmed cities of the midwestern states!
We will rise from the sun-baked south!

We will rebuild, reconcile, and recover,
In every known nook of our nation,
In every corner called our country,
Our people diverse and dutiful.
We'll emerge, battered, but beautiful.

When day comes, we step out of the shade,
Aflame and unafraid.
The new dawn blooms as we free it,
For there is always light,
If only we're brave enough to see it,
If only we're brave enough to be it.

-- Amanda Gorman