

Before We Learned History

When I was younger,
the world felt right.
People were good.
The days were bright.

At recess we shared,
we made room in the game,
and nobody wondered
if we looked the same.

If someone stood lonely,
we would wave them our way.
We thought everyone
deserved to play.

Nobody explained
what freedom could be.
Nobody said
the word liberty.

Nobody taught us
how governments start,
or that voices and choices
could drift apart.

It just felt simple.
It just felt true.
If something was fair,
then that's what we'd do.

Then in fourth grade
we started to learn
that history twists
and history turns.

We learned the words
of the Declaration,
words that helped shape
our growing nation.

"All men are created equal."
The message felt so true.
It sounded like the kind of thing
that children already knew.

We learned a nation
should hear its people speak,
and listen to the voices
of the strong and of the weak.

That life should be protected.
That liberty should stay.
That happiness is something
people should chase each day.

I liked those ideas.
They sounded right.
But then I learned
change took a fight.

"All men are created equal."
The meaning seemed so plain.
Then we learned how many people
had been left out again.

History was not
just dates to recite.
It was people who looked
at the world and said,
this is not right.

Rosa Parks stayed seated
when others said move,
and showed that one small action
still had something to prove.

Martin Luther King Jr. had a dream
that one day we would see
people judged by who they are,
not who others think they should be.

Susan B. Anthony kept speaking
because women's votes should belong,
and proved that staying silent
can keep things unfair for too long.

Ruby Bridges kept walking
through doors others closed,
showing even children
can be braver than they know.

Harriet Tubman kept leading
through darkness toward the light,
showing freedom is worth
the hardest fight.

None of them finished the story.
None of them stood alone.
They simply saw what was not right
and worked to make it known.

And sitting there in social studies,
I started wondering too.
Maybe standing up for what is right
starts with the smaller things we do.

Making room.
Speaking up.
Letting someone join in too.

Two hundred fifty years have passed,
and people still disagree,
still argue, still keep trying
to become what we hope to be.

Maybe that is why
those old words still remain.
Each generation tries
to bring them back again.

And maybe all those people
were helping us recall
the simple truth we knew at recess,
that there's room enough for all.