

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal...”

The words were written
with ink that did not yet know
every hand it would leave out.

Still,
they traveled through centuries
like a promise unfinished,
folded into the pockets
of dreamers and marchers,
workers with chafed hands,
children crossing school doors
guarded by hatred,
voices rising from sidewalks
and church pews,
from reservations,
from fields,
from city blocks humming
with sirens and hope.

America is a choir
still learning harmony.

One child is born
where the water tastes rusted, food is scarce,

another beneath chandeliers
bright as small suns, where food is never ending and money is never tight.
One walks to school
past broken glass,
another past gardens
trimmed into perfection.
They both recite:
“liberty and justice for all,”
but the words land differently
depending on the zip code, or the color of your skin.

Equality says:
every runner may enter the race.

Equity says:
some have been running
against the wind for generations,
ankles chained by history,

roads cracked beneath their feet,
while others inherit bicycles,
maps,
and a ten-second head start.

To be equal
is not to pretend that
we began the same.

It is to notice
who is unheard
at the meeting table,
whose names are mispronounced,
whose neighborhoods are redlined,
whose prayers are mocked,
whose skin becomes suspicion,
whose hunger is called laziness,
whose pain becomes statistics.

And yet

there is something stubborn
inside this country.

A belief that justice
can still be built
like bridges over rivers
once thought uncrossable.

I see it
in the teacher buying pencils
for every student,
in the protester linking arms
with strangers,
in the farmer sharing food,
in the immigrant mother
working night shifts
so her daughter may speak
without fear,
in ballots cast,
in laws rewritten,
in voices once whispered
now echoing through capitol halls.

America is not finished.

Not while children still learn
history edited into comfort.
Not while wages divide
along color and gender.
Not while some must fight
to prove their humanity
before they are allowed
to simply live.

But listen

the story is changing.

Slow as dawn,
steady as a baby's footsteps
crossing Selma's bridge,
strong as hands
lifting one another
after every storm.

Perhaps equality
is not a destination
engraved in marble.

Perhaps it is a practice

to see each other clearly,
to share the weight,
to widen the doorway,
to refuse a freedom
that belongs only to some.

And maybe one day,
those old words
will finally tell the whole truth

that all are created equal,
and all deserve
an equal chance
to live freely, to love freely, to be free.