

## **“Holding Onto the Future”**

**By: Katie Messinger**

*Based off of the experience of growing up in Richmond, VA and being influenced by the wonderful Ms. Vivan from my church.*

The small, plump ivory hand rests  
comfortably  
In the worn & weathered coffee colored  
grasp.  
The difference in age is more of a gulf  
Than the segregation of their city's past.

“What did you learn about this week?”  
Is asked with a bemused smile.  
“Well it's February, we learned about  
How people of color were put on trial”.

The innocent voice can't coat the truth  
Of the quickly uttered words.  
The old head bobs thinking how  
Profoundly the proof can be heard.

How can she explain to this little friend,  
That what's been taught is just a means to  
an end.  
A list of the names, people, places and  
dates.  
A summary of history, an inventory to relate.  
What about the pain, the pride, and the  
experience-  
Long overshadowed and reduced in glory?  
**Her heart is heavy to think that those minds  
Might be taught only briefly of humankind  
As a one-sided dangerous single story.**

Each Sunday they meet,  
and sit together at church.

To hear the good word and remember  
that love can't be set on a perch...  
Like an out of touch antiquity that is  
All talk and no show.  
So their hands hook together  
Adding strength which lightens the blow,  
Of the reality that is: this little one will  
Age in a time of great change.  
But the battles that rage shall be  
Nothing new, *how sadly strange*.

She heaves a great sigh,  
Her body shifting in the pew.  
The little eyes dart up, bright, brilliant, &  
blue,  
“Why are you sad?” is asked in a whisper,  
But the old fingers simply tighten, making  
their clasp crisper.

Knowing there is too much to say but not  
enough words  
She sends up a prayer for events yet to  
have occurred  
She prays for the future, where one day  
There'll be  
no need to feel embarrassed  
or a desire to flee.  
She asks for the strength to guide this  
Young mind  
And for swift deliverance from those who  
are perpetually blind.

The hope flies from her soul as she bows  
Her head in praise  
of those who walked before her, and  
showed her the ways.  
Those who made it possible for her to sit  
here today,  
and those who will come next emboldened  
and ablaze.

Cracking open an eye, she sees the small  
hand, which has not left hers as they move  
to stand.  
Her spirit is renewed as she thinks to  
herself, this one can write lines not yet out  
on a shelf.  
If they listen to each other and lead out with  
love, the promise of tomorrow will be  
granted from above.  
A world that no longer turns a blind eye,  
But sees those in front of them without the  
lies.

Where names are pronounced as their  
mother's intended,  
And people are people without being  
offended.  
A world where history is taught without  
omission, and one where your background  
doesn't determine your position.

A time where your culture isn't confined to  
one month,  
And where equal representation is more  
than enough.

Yes, this little hand that is wrapped up in  
hers, is bringing new life to the possibility it  
refers. It offers a chance for those who don't  
know,  
To ask more and listen, an opportunity to  
grow.

This little hand- while different it may be,  
There is no doubt it can grow to be free  
Of the stereotyped ideas it's whiteness  
decrees,  
As this little hand once belonged to me.