



**We are  
Called**

TO HEAL. TO UNITE. TO JUSTICE.

## Team Reflection

### No. 1 Merging Mercy with Might

If people didn't know her as the Inaugural National Youth Poet Laureate, they came to know Amanda Gorman as the young woman who composed and delivered a poem at the 2021 Inauguration of President Joe Biden. Weeks after the Harvard-educated young woman inspired the nation she found herself tailed by a security guard while walking home. The guard questioned where she lived and commented, "You look suspicious."

Such overt and skeptical questioning of Gorman belonging in a particular place is experienced in countless ways by black, brown and ethnic minorities regularly, if not daily. Cagey behaviors and undercutting remarks are often subtle but still present. They may be a cold shoulder, a sneer or a disapproving glance.

Whether subtle and overt, repeated experiences of disapproval or negative bias have severe and harmful health effects on historically marginalized groups. A growing body of research documents how these experiences activate stress responses and defensive instincts, unleashing stress hormones that can be toxic and compromise systems in the body. [1.1]

Gorman showed the security guard her keys and buzzed herself into her building. Perhaps she formed her ability to deescalate such situations in her earlier years. The young woman grew up in South Central Los Angeles, singing in the youth choir and sharing her poetry at St. Brigid Catholic Church. Steeped in the Gospel stories and parables that often turn situations on their heads, Gorman reflected on how the guard perceived her as a threat on the street. She wrote, "In a sense, he was right. I AM A THREAT: a threat to injustice, to inequality, to ignorance. Anyone who speaks the truth and walks with hope is an obvious and fatal danger to the powers that be." [1.2]

#### Consider

- Can you think of a time someone abrasively questioned you? How did you feel, and where did that land in your body? Or have you witnessed this happening to someone else in your presence, such as while you waited in line somewhere?

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- What might it look like in your own life today to "merge mercy with might?"
- Think of one thing you can do in the work and ministry you do here today, to leave it behind a little better than when you started the day or the week?

**Let us use Amanda Gorman's words from inauguration day as prayer:**

*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...*

[1] <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2017/11/11/562623815/scientists-start-to-tease-out-the-subtler-ways-racism-hurts-health>

[1.2] See Amanda Gorman's social media profile and post:  
<https://twitter.com/theamandagorman/status/1368016803553710082?s=21>