

Poetry as an Anchor for my Spiritual Journey

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Received Sept 2021

Accepted for publication Oct 2021

Published Nov 2021

Abstract

Paula Lightsey's personal mission statement is to inspire, guide, and nurture the human spirit to cultivate change for the collective good of humanity. These poems serve as an anchor for this mission and for her spiritual journey.

Keywords: poetry, mindfulness, contemplative practices

What motivated me to write these poems at the age of 30 was the transformation of what was happening in my life. Work was my refuge and safe space. My birth family was all in another state and my "friend family" carried me when the burden was too heavy. Journaling and creative writing gave me a sense of peace moment to moment. What I knew for sure was that everything was going to be okay so stillness and walking was a gift. In 2018 when I experienced a work crisis, again I sat in stillness, walked for hours each day, chatted with friends and family and resurfaced my creativity, gardening, love for music, poetry and the simple joy of laughter. Mindful breathing and meditation was also an anchor for my spiritual journey and today in 2021, I am stronger than ever knowing that I have contemplative practices that I can always draw on.

The Stillness of the Moment

The stillness of the moment allows you to be...

Thoughtful

Thoughtless

It creates a space that never needs to be shared

It's a private haven of colorless thoughts

An open space

A pause

A light smile that captures a memory

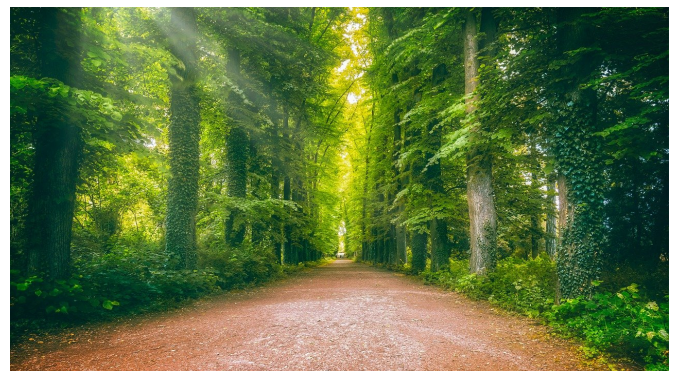
It can be a mindless task that gives strength to the weary

A frozen moment as colorful as your...

Fantasies

Reality

But yours



Walking Away

I've often thought of just putting my feet into a pair
of socks
A pair of shoes
And simply walking away
Walking away from reality - what is reality
Reality is the day you awaken to the dark blue
colored clouds
The window pelting rain
The whirling wind blowing to tip your balance to
one side
Reality is that sunny day that you wish could last
forever
Forever as in those wonderful experiences
That subjoin your very fiber
Could be the reality of happiness
The reality of sadness
Just an unfulfilled day due to a fast ticking clock
So walk away if you may and your reality will
forever walk with you

Acknowledgement

Paula Lightsey's personal mission statement is to *inspire, guide, and nurture the human spirit to cultivate change for the collective good of humanity.*

Lightsey, presently serves as a central office supervisor for Southfield Public Schools in Southfield, MI. Prior to this position, she was the founding Principal of an International Baccalaureate Primary and Middle Years Program that was grounded in civility, cultivating character development, social justice, self-confidence, and academics. She has served in several roles over her 35 years of experience, as teacher, counselor, educational consultant and holds

degrees in administrative leadership, counseling, and special education.

Her current work goal is to take social emotional learning to scale in the district, leveraging and aligning all the great practices that exist in each building from school to central office.

She has a passion, gift, and intuitive nature that motivates and drives people to reach their fullest potential. Integrating academic, social and emotional programs for students, educators and communities, gives her joy.

Since her Transformative Educational Leadership experience Paula has created Power of the Pause, (P.O.P.), mindful learning meditation sessions to support her school district community. Her compassionate encouragement and guided meditations have reached students, parents, co-workers, families and friends. Paula is inspiring people to understand that there are things you can control and things you can't control, and that is ok. Participants report that the POP sessions have helped them relax, focus, experience gratitude, peace, tranquility, motivation and a feeling of being ready to take on the day. She has designed and/or collaborated on the following opportunities for her district; Mindfulness for Teens Series, Mindfulness a Deeper Dive Adult Series, Family Resiliency Tool Kits, and Mindful Photography.

Her belief is that social emotional skills are a pathway to self-care, health, success and happiness. On a typical day with constant temptations to distraction, she believes it is imperative to learn how to focus your breathing, be aware of your thoughts and sensation in your body. Her strategies and practices of mindfulness, mindful yoga helps her continue to focus on the positive and not give into the fear and uncertainty brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. Her daily practice of being able to focus moment to moment when feeling stress and anxiety has heightened her awareness of the benefits of her practice.

She believes that as we meander through our cultural and health shifts, a simple change can have a huge rippling impact on self and the world. You can always learn, reinvent, and practice new habits, no matter your age or station in life.

Credentials:

Educational Specialist, Administration and Supervision, Wayne State University
Master of Arts, Guidance and Counseling, Eastern Michigan University
Bachelor of Science, Special Education, College of new Jersey (Trenton State College)
Transformative Educational Leadership Follow (TEL)
Mindful Leader Certified Mindfulness Facilitator
Breathe for Change Certified SEL Facilitator
Yoga Alliance Certified 200 hour Yoga Teacher