





*The Voices That
Should've Mattered*

A Poetry Collection

By Skylar Thaker



PART 1



POETRY
COLLECTION

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The 'ideal' list

Ain't I a Kid?

Dear Santa,

I promise this letter won't be very long
But for Christmas this year, can I stop being strong?

I've watched you get caught by the Burgermeister each year,
And I wonder why Miss Jessica was allowed to shed a tear

My family says to keep my head held high
But sometimes I just want to be able to cry

At school this week my teacher gave me praise,
For not playing into the typical "cliches"

Earlier this month, when Roots was released,
My white friend said her life felt as if newly leased

I knew what they meant, I wanted to scream
and curse the person who invented this scheme

I know you're not him, so I can't fault you for that
And the last thing I want is to sound like a brat

But when you open this letter and you're tempted to scoff
Just know the only thing I want this Christmas

Is one day off

Niño Dios

My mother says you are always near

“When there is trouble, Niño Dios will lend an ear”

So, on Noche Buena this year, I want to ask you,

Do something for the people of Lima, Peru

I'm only twelve, I'm trying my best

All I want is for my mom to rest

She works in the factories, but they've gone on strike

Dad says they're fighting for her child-care right

He took me to see her inside your church,

and the lack of food makes my stomach lurch

But I don't want food for her, or even a drink

Because I know what the factory owners would think

No one is listening, and I fear for the worst

I don't know she'll survive past the thirty-first

I know you are always listening, that is what you do,

But when will you especially listen to what is happening

in Lima, Peru



Thought Woman,

You hold many names, but one thing remains true
In terms of my Universe you are the glue

Every day in my culture is a celebration
Of the prosperity you provide throughout the generations

But this time of year is special in nature,
Christmas actually, if you care for nomenclature

There is one thing in specific I want this year,
Help me protect our women, those near and dear

Girls like my sister, only thirteen years of age
The victim of a mans misplaced outrage

The cops in neighboring cities don't have to think twice
For a case to be determined our life a sufficient price

I know that Christmas is time for celebration
Except this year it's the anniversary of a cremation

Thought Woman this year I want nothing more,
Than for you to help me fight this battle

And win the war

no. 31

Christmas Wars

Father christmas,

You have not existed in my traditions very long

But the fact remains I still dance to your songs

In my mom's culture, you are called Santa claus

I don't want to tell her that you're full of flaws

If you were real, my wishes would be true

And we wouldn't have flown across the ocean-blue

I'd still be in Jinja, in the culture I loved

Not in this armpit where we were shoved

I'm angry at Kelsey, my mom, and her crew

Because I was a child who needed saving too

No one asked me what I thought,

I was only shown what their actions wrought

If you were real, Father christmas I know

For all my letters I'd have something to show

So whoever is reading this, to you I say

To hell with your gifts

and that bright red sleigh

Serving

no. 4

Her

Greed

Dear Santa,

This year my Christmas list is numbered in the few,

I know there are other kids who will want gifts too

First I want a pony, a dog, and a cat

and if it's not too much, can you make sure they're fat?

Next, I want two American Girl dolls with outfits that match

I trust that you'll get ones from the very best batch

Let's see what else I can ask for under my tree

It's not in a box, but how about a shopping spree?

Now I think there's just a thing or two more,

Something you can't find even in store

I read the first of a series about Warrior Cats and their brethren

I was hoping you'd get me every book, in total there are ninety-seven

I bet you're wondering why all my gifts are in sets,

It wasn't on purpose, I just didn't want any regrets

Mr. Claus, I know that these gifts are far from free,

So just make sure when you come this year

It's down the right chimney

no. 5

Just a Few

PART 2

PROJECT
EXPLANATION

DEVELOPMENT

I wanted this project to explore the feminist frameworks of women of color through the lens of child-like understanding. The concepts we wrestle with in this course are topics that can take decades of formal education and social immersion to fully grasp, something that a child has not yet been exposed to.

My little brother isn't thinking about what's happening in Gaza or Kyiv, for example. It's not something that actively impacts his day. But the children of those cities, they're not thinking about who got the better score on the pop quiz. Their experiences are fundamentally different from my brother, and as such provide distinctly different preconceptions about their world.

However, there is even further diversification provided by their preconceptions. An adult who grew up in Gaza or Kyiv may have similar conceptions about their world, but undoubtedly more complex in nature. Their maturity provides them with more knowledge and experience as well as increasingly intricate brain processes to allow for it all to be stored and applied.

Additionally, the human brain is not fully developed until the age of 25, when the prefrontal cortex matures. This is the site of reasoning, comprehension, impulse control, and pretty much every other major brain function responsible for forming complex, regulated thought. This is not to say children are incapable of understanding complex situations, but rather that a child's understanding of a situation is different at its most basic components.

'SANTA CLAUS'

WHY LETTERS TO SANTA?

I decided to frame these voices through the lens of letters to Santa, or the child's cultural equivalent of a Santa Claus figure, for two reasons. First, letters like these are most often a place where children can express their desires without typical social niceties. They don't need to worry about judgement from parents or peers here, they can say what they really mean.

Additionally, as children we are drawn to the magic that permits the existence of beings like Santa. I remember when I was in elementary school I'd write letters to Santa at school before Winter Break each year. Often times I wished for standard toys like stuffed animals or dolls, but occasionally I'd wish for something like another sibling, or a slew of house pets thinking maybe my dad would just let one slide (this is actually how I ended up with two guinea pigs in 3rd grade).

MODERN DAY SANTA

The origins of Santa Claus date all the way back to the 4th century, when Christian Saint Nickolas would have been alive. However, it would be another 15 centuries before St. Nickolas became St. Claus. The legend of St. Claus came around during the early 1800's, when Dutch settlers in early New York City began spreading tales of a jolly old man who gave gifts to children the night before Christmas. This version of Santa is the one referenced in poems no. 1, 4, and 5.

VARIATIONS OF SANTA

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Father Christmas is one of the many names given to St. Nickolas over the years. His story and appearance are unchanged from the modern day Santa, although sometimes he is seen to sport a blue coat instead of the traditional red.

Father Christmas is known in many parts of the world including Uganda, although he is far more common in the urban areas

NIÑO DIOS

Niño Dios, the Child God, is often dubbed as the Latin American equivalent of Santa Claus

Christmas celebrations in Latin cultures are centered around the birth of Niño Dios. His arrival into the world marked the first Christmas gift given to the World

THOUGHT WOMAN

Believed by the Indigenous to be a spirit of immeasurable power, Thought Woman is the basis of all that exists, having come before creation itself.

While not technically associated with Christmas, Thought Woman provides the same basic belief principles to a child that Santa would.

Themes

No. 1

This poem takes place in the late 70's, and incorporates Bell Hook's conversation in 'Ain't I a Woman' on the need for black women to always be strong in the face of oppression.

This poem incorporates two pop culture references meant to help contextualize the child's surroundings

No. 2

The idea for poem no. 2 came from a set of unpublished letters written in the 1980's from children in Peru, one of which composes the last two lines of this piece.

The feminist frameworks identified here are in regard to the lack of female advocacy present in the 1980's

No. 3

Thought Woman acts as a surrogacy Santa in poem no. 4, rather than a direct interpretation of St. Nickolas

The themes this child wrestles with are entrenched in hundreds of years of cultural erasure and colonist-provided sexism. This is arguably the heaviest piece, discussing the murder of the child's sister

No. 4

Instead of doing this piece based on another set of articles, I decided to analyze the white saviourism in the Renee Bach case to tell the story from her daughters P.O.V

This is the only piece that does have a specifically intended narrator, due to its situational specificities

No. 5

This piece is intended to be the reference point for what this same conversation between Santa and a middle-class white female child would look like. The gift ideas are based on my own letter to Santa as a kid, although the entitled nature is of fictional creation.

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PART 2

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