

FASTING FOR JUSTICE IN SOLIDARITY WITH IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES



Thank you for adding your voice to thousands of others praying and fasting for immigrant justice.

Fasting for justice can be a powerful and emotional experience. It is the hope that each individual who participates in a fast for justice will be transformed and challenged through that fasting, as well as through reflection and prayer.

It is also the hope that some fasts for justice will have an external impact as well, possibly influencing those in power to stand up against injustice and to support policies that affirm the human and civil rights of immigrants and all people.

In this packet are resources designed to help you reflect personally, using journal and reflection questions to record your own journey, as well as resources to help you multiply the impact of your personal efforts and affect change out in the world.

These resources include:

- Basic Information About Fasting (Page 3)
- Tips for Fasting Safely (Pages 4-5)
- Materials for personal reflection (Pages 5-15)
- Verses from faith texts relating to immigration (pages 16-18)
- Post-Fast Questions for Reflection and Next Steps (page 19)

By taking time to step back from our busy lives, reflect, and fast in solidarity together for justice, we acknowledge that the change we seek and the world we work towards begins within. Solidarity might look different for everyone, and we welcome the way in which you'd like to participate. Together, we are committed to having a shared experience that is unforgettable.

Here's to a safe, grounding, deepening, and effective fast!



American Friends Service Committee
a Quaker organization

*****Cover art work by Favianna Rodriguez******

**Solidarity looks different for everyone,
and we welcome the way in which you'd like to
participate.**

What ever fasting looks like for you, you may consider:

Types of fasts

- Non-food fasts: give up TV, computer games, speaking etc.
- Partial fast: give up some, but not all foods (e.g. give up meat, sweets, etc.)
- Complete fast: give up all food, and take only water and juice

Suggestions for what to do when you fast

- Dedicate the time/money you would normally spend on eating/ watching t.v. etc. to reflection
- Set aside extra time for meditation, reflection and/or prayer (otherwise you are just skipping meals/activities)

Whatever fasting looks like for you, you may consider:

- meditating or reflecting in silence at each meal
- giving thanks for the food you consume and the people who helped bring it to your table
- discussing your commitment with your community or family at each meal
- fasting by eating food only after sun down
- fasting from eating processed foods, meat, drinking alcohol, or caffeine
- drinking only water, juice, or broth for...
 - the last week of the fast period
 - the three days before the breaking of the fast
 - the day before the breaking of the fast, sun down to sun down

Suggestions for Times of Spiritual Fasting During the Year:

Lent

Ramadan

New Year's

Start of a legislative session (local, state, national)

The immigrant community calls for a fast

TIPS ON HOW TO FAST

In spite of the relative safety and benefits of fasting, there are certain persons who should **NEVER** fast from food without professional supervision (see types of fasts for other options). For example:

- Persons who are physically thin or emaciated.
- Those who suffer weakness or anemia.
- Persons who have tumors, bleeding ulcers, cancer, blood diseases, or who have heart disease.
- Those who suffer chronic problems with kidneys, liver, lungs, heart, or other important organs.
- Individuals who take insulin for diabetes, or suffer any other blood sugar problem such as hyperglycemia.
- Persons who are prone to anorexia, bulimia, or other behavioral disorders.
- Women who are pregnant or nursing.

Q. How might I feel while fasting?

A. It is common to feel some uncomfortable sensations during a period of fasting. These include headache, fatigue, and some nausea later in the fast, and lightheadedness or dizziness especially with standing up (*Sitting up for a second before moving to standing helps*).

- Coffee and tea drinkers may try to reduce their consumption several days before their fast. If you normally consume caffeine, you will probably experience withdrawal headaches or migraines triggered by fasting
- On a longer fast, you might need more rest than usual. Plan to rest and nap throughout the time.
- Be prepared to be a little more tired or feel cold. It helps to have warm clothing to help maintain body temperature.
- It is important to continue to drink plenty of water and fluids.

Those who have health problems that may be affected by fasting should check with their doctor first before fasting more than one day

Ideas for Next Steps

Talk about your post-fast reflections with family, friends, and others.

Create a picture, image, collage, mural, or other form of art that reflects your experience of the fast and share it with others or display it publicly. Send a photo to Jennifer Piper, Interfaith Organizing Director at the AFSC Colorado office jpiper@afsc.org

Write out what you've learned/gained/realized as a result of the fast and share it with others, on a blog, in a newsletter, newspaper, or social media. Share in an email to jpiper@afsc.org

Research online about other spiritual fasts for justice and what others were led to do following them. Share your findings with others.

Come to a Coloradoans for Immigrant Rights (CFIR) meeting to get more involved. Contact Jordan Garcia (JGarcia@afsc.org) for more information.

Contact the Denver Office of the American Friends Service Committee to find out more about immigrant justice in Colorado. Contact Jennifer Piper (JPiper@afsc.org) for more info.

Post-Fast Questions for Reflection

1. How did spiritual fasting for justice serve to deepen your faith or connect Immigration more deeply to your faith practice?

2. How was your fast an act of solidarity with immigrants? How was it not?

3. Now that your fast is over, how will you share the process and your reflections with others?

Q. How can I make sure I am taking care of myself while fasting?

A. Make sure you consult your doctor if you have any of the conditions listed above. If you begin to feel concerned about your health- STOP FASTING and consult a medical professional!

- If fasting for more than 24 hours, include juice otherwise you run the risk of over-toxication, breakdown of vital body tissues, and loss of electrolytes all of which are serious enough to land you in the hospital:
- Drink the following awesome juices: fresh carrot, grape, celery, apple, cabbage, or beet

Q. How can I end my fast safely?

A. Generally, you should take the same amount of time as you spend fasting to ease back into regular eating. This is especially important for fasts longer than 1-2 days.

Space to write any questions you might have for your doctor and directions your doctor may want you to follow

Cesar Chavez led a hunger strike in 1968 to support migrant grape workers who were demanding a raise from the dollar-an-hour they were being paid. The 25-day fast, in conjunction with many other tactics—marches, boycotts, strikes, picketing, and consumer



education—caused the workers to achieve not only better pay but health care benefits. Here, he breaks his 25-day fast by accepting bread from Senator Robert Kennedy in Delano, California, March 10th, 1968.

In 1989, Chavez engaged in a "**Fast for Life**" that sought to expose the dangers of pesticide use to farm workers and their children. After 36 days, the 61-year-old Chavez passed the hunger strike to **Rev. Jesse**

Jackson, symbolically handing him the small metal cross he had carried throughout his fast. (Chavez was a devout Catholic, and his hunger strikes, like Gandhi's, were highly spiritual in nature.) He then broke bread with the children he was fasting to protect from

pesticide poisoning—a highly publicized event that won hearts nationwide. Over the following months, the rolling fast coursed through celebrities, workers, and communities. These fasts, among other successful campaigns, made the United Farm Workers one of the most powerful labor groups in history.



***The Qur'an** (The vers e numbers given in the references below sometimes vary slightly in different editions and translations of the Quran. However, they are rarely off by more than five verses in either direction.)*

Verse 107 In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful Hast thou observed him who belieeth (makes a lie of) religion? This is he who repelleth the orphan, And urgeth not the feeding of the needy. Ah, woe unto worshippers Who are heedless of their prayer; Who would be seen (at worship) Yet refuse small kindnesses.

Verse 4:97 Lo! as for those whom the angels take (in death) while they wrong themselves (by sinning), (the angels) will ask: In what were ye engaged? They will say: We were oppressed in the land. (The angels) will say: Was not God's earth spacious that ye could have migrated therein?

Verse 55:9 But those who entered the city and the faith before them love those who flee unto them for refuge, and find in their breasts no need for that which has been given to them, but prefer (the refugees) above themselves though poverty become their lot. And who is saved from his own avarice—such are they

who are successful.

Verse 16:41 And those who became (refugees) for the cause of God after they had been oppressed. We verily shall give them goodly lodging in the world, and surely the reward of the hereafter is greater, if they but knew.

Verse 24:22 And let not those who possess dignity and ease among you swear not to give to the near of kin and to the needy, and to refugees for the cause of God. Let them forgive and show indulgence. Yearn ye not that God forgive you? God is Forgiving, Merciful.

Verse 4:135 Be ye staunch in justice, witnesses for God, even though it be against (the worldly interests) of yourselves or (your) parents or (your) kindred, whether (the case be of) a rich man or a poor man.

Verse 5:8 Be steadfast witnesses for God in equity, and let not hatred of any people seduce you that ye deal not justly. Deal justly, that is nearer to your duty. Observe your duty to God. Lo! God is Informed of what ye do.

explained to you; this is what Yahweh asks of you: only this, to act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God.

Zechariah 7: 8-11 (The word of Yahweh was addressed to Zechariah as follows:) He said: Apply the law fairly, and practice kindness and compassion toward each other. Do not oppress the widow and the orphan, the settler and the poor man, and do not secretly plan evil against one another.

Christian Bible

Matthew 25: 35-40 For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me; sick and you visited me; in prison and you came to see me... I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.

Mark 12: 30-31 This is the first [commandment]...you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: You must love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.

Luke 4: 18-19 The spirit of the Lord

has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favor.

Galatians 3: 28...there are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, but all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 2: 5-8 In your minds you must be the same as Christ Jesus: His state was divine, yet he did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are; and being as all men are, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross.

Colossians 3: 12-13 You are God's chosen race, his saints; he loves you, and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience.

1 John 4: 19-21 Anyone who says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, is a liar, since a man who does not love the brother that he can see cannot love God, whom he has never seen. So this is the commandment that he has given us, that anyone who loves God must also love his brother.

Fasting is often used as a tool to make a political statement, to protest, or to bring awareness to a cause. A prominent figure associated with "spiritual fast" was labor leader and activist, Cesar Chavez. A spiritual fast is a particular fast that incorporates personal spiritual beliefs with the desire to express personal principles.

Reflection Journal: Week 1 Take some time to reflect on your commitment and set an intention for your action. If you are fasting, carry this intention with you, reflect and write when you feel hungry or talk with someone about your fast or commitment. *Center yourself somewhere quiet and give yourself 45 minutes to an hour at a time to journal.*

Describe your commitment and what it means to you...
For example: "I will fast from sun up to sun down to demonstrate my solidarity and sacrifice with people whose lives are affected by the injustice of our immigration system."

Set an intention for your fast....
(i.e. solidarity, sacrifice, hope, healing, raising awareness, etc.)

Please email Jennifer Piper at jpiper@afsc.org with your name, the time you are dedicating to solidarity and your intention!

Mohamed's Journey

Mohamed came to the US from Somalia as a refugee in 2000. The transition was somewhat eased by having a relative who lived here, but being a refugee was hard at the beginning.



Mohamed explains that it was challenging to find a place to live and to get the correct work permits. Still, there was relief to be had in the Somali community. "By our nature, Somalis, we help each other as a community. People are very collective in helping each other," explains Mohamed. He ultimately found a place to live and a company that would hire him.

In 2005 after some job transitions, Mohamed started in the taxi business. Today, he works for Union Taxi, a driver-owned and operated company based in Metro-Denver. Mohamed explains that, "Most of the drivers are immigrants who came to this country looking for a better life for themselves and their families." The majority are from East Africa, like Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Sudan. "Of course, we have brothers from other countries, like Armenia." Union Taxi also has US born drivers, and Mohamed reiterates, "we are all brothers in the company."

Mohamed says that his passengers make him feel especially welcome here in Colorado. "They always ask where I'm from. By the end of the ride, they say 'Welcome to your new home'."

Mohamed has a wife and two beautiful children. One is a baby girl, who was born just months ago. She is named Muneera. "It's an Arabic name," explains Mohamed. "It's tradition in our Islamic culture to call our children Arabic names." Mohamed's other daughter, three years old, is named Noor. Mohamed explains that both names mean light, "but in slightly different ways."

Mohamed says one of his favorite parts of Colorado is the beauty of the landscape. "The land is so open here. Your eyes can look all the way to the horizon," he explains. "It feels so good."

Immigrants in the Jewish, Muslim, and Christian Texts

Hebrew Bible

Exodus 23: 9 You must not oppress the stranger; you know how a stranger feels, for you lived as strangers in the land of Egypt.

Leviticus 19: 32-34 If a stranger lives with you in your land, do not molest him. You must count him as one of your own countrymen and love him as yourself—for you were once strangers yourselves in Egypt. I am Yahweh your God.

Tobit 4: 7-8 Set aside part of your goods for almsgiving. Never turn your face from any poor man and God will never turn his from you.

Psalms 82: 2-4 No more mockery of justice, no more favoring of the wicked! Let the weak and the orphan have justice, be fair to the wretched and destitute; rescue the weak and needy, save them from the clutches of the wicked!

Psalms 103: 6 Yahweh, who does what is right, is always on the side of the oppressed.

Proverbs 31: 8-9 Speak, yourself, on behalf of the dumb, on behalf of all the unwanted; speak, yourself, pronounce a just verdict, uphold the

rights of the poor, of the needy.

Ecclesiasticus 4: 8-9 To the poor man lend an ear, and return his greeting courteously. Save the oppressed from the hand of the oppressor, and do not be mean-spirited in your judgments.

Isaiah 10: 1-2 Woe to the legislators of infamous laws, to those who issue tyrannical decrees, who refuse justice to the unfortunate and cheat the poor among my people of their rights, who make widows their prey, and rob the orphan.

Isaiah 61: 1-2 The spirit of the Lord Yahweh has been given to me, for Yahweh has anointed me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to bind up hearts that are broken; to proclaim liberty to the captives, freedom to those in prison; to proclaim a year of favor from Yahweh.

Jeremiah 22: 3-4 Yahweh says this: Practice honesty and integrity; rescue the man who has been wronged from the hands of his oppressor; do not exploit the stranger, the orphan, the widow; do no violence, shed no innocent blood in this place.

Micah 6: 8 What is good has been

What are some differences in your own? Why do you think there are differences?

What are some things you could do/change in yourself or in your faith community to embody your vision of community and confront some of these difficult realities?

What are some things you could do/change in yourself or in your faith community to be in solidarity with these aspirations?

Janenth's Move

Originally from Ecuador, Janneth came to the US to be with her mother, who had moved here and married an American. Janneth's new step-father helped the family adjust.

Telling your story is subversive, creating shared story is transformative, taking action around shared story is revolution! Changing the dominant story is liberation.

Of course, Janneth's move was not easy. "In terms of work, there

has been discrimination," she says, either because her English is not good enough or because "they assume that we don't have documents."

This has been a painful reality. "They treat us differently, they pay us less." Today, Janneth lives with her mother and her young son, the only family members she has here in the US.

When asked what has made her feel welcome here in Colorado, Janneth speaks of El Centro Humanitario, a worker's center in Denver. At El Centro, Janneth is part of a women's group. "They help with work, with education," Janneth explains. "We better our English and learn computer skills."

But the friendships Janneth has found at El Centro are what make it a truly special place. "We're all from different countries. We eat together, tell stories, share in worries and joys. It's very welcoming."



These two stories collected by Welcoming Colorado. Welcoming Colorado seeks to strengthen our state by giving immigrant and non-immigrant communities a chance to break down barriers, share experiences and correct

misinformation. Welcoming Colorado's central mission is community engagement and relationship building between immigrant and non-immigrant communities with the aim of mutual respect and understanding. Please visit: <http://welcomingcolorado.org/>

Reflection Journal: Week 2- Think about Mohamed & Janneth's & answer these questions.

What does the word community mean to you?

What are words or images that embody community?

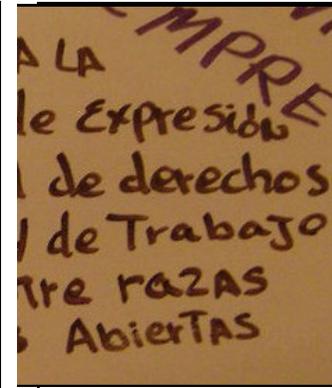
Who would be a part of your ideal community?

See pages 20 to 24 for verses from spiritual texts.

Who does your faith community, family, convictions call you to be in community with?

Then gather magazines and newspapers together. Make a collage of the words and images that represent community to you.

Take a picture of your collage and send it to jpiper@afsc.org and we'll post it on facebook!

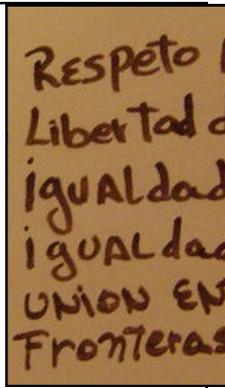


As you read the volunteer group's challenges and difficulties which ones don't you experience? Why not?

Think of your own, or your faith's, vision of community. Are these challenging realities a part of that vision ?

In thinking of you hopes, dreams and aspirations, what are some similarities you shared? Why do you think you share these similarities?

In thinking of painful, challenging and difficult realities that worry you, what are some similarities you shared with immigrant voices? Why do you think you share these similarities?



What differences? Why do you think there are differences?

Reflection Journal: Week 5– Offering up Hopes and Challenges

Take some long deep breaths; close your eyes, take a minute to be present with everything this exercise has raised for you: Ways you felt challenged, hopes or dreams you identified with, and then reflect on these questions:

What are some of the root causes of the challenges or difficulties that you share?

Space for drawing and your collage!

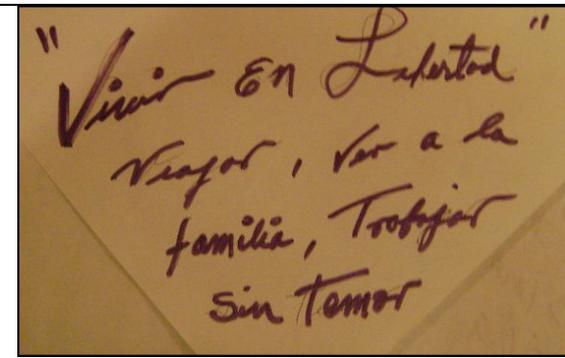
Reflection Journal: Week 3- Think of yourself and your family*

If the world were limitless in possibility: What are your hopes, dreams and aspirations for yourself, your family and your community?

What challenging, painful or difficult realities are you, your family and your community facing? What worries you?

**On our use of the word "family" – family in most discourse on immigration policy is not used to describe unmarried, non-blood, and queer familial relations. Here we recognize the inherent value, legitimacy and importance of these relationships regardless of state sanction.*

- Reunifying with my family. Many of us have not seen our parents, sisters, brothers or children in years.
- Equal access to good education, including higher education for ourselves (many of us are young adults) and/or our children.
- To live without fear
- That all people can live and work together without conflict
- Be able to learn and to speak English very well.
- Have opportunities for good work/career
- Acquire decent and affordable housing, including opportunity for home ownership
- Have good transportation



Reflection Journal: Week 4– Offering up Hopes and Challenges

The immigrant English as a Second Language class in Denver requested that you offer up their hopes and your hopes in some way. You might write a prayer, a poem, or a song or drawing here. You might light a candle each night and hold onto each of these hopes in its light for a time.

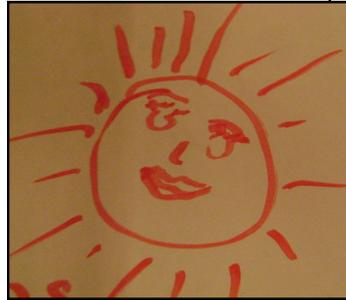
What struck you most as you read these hopes and challenges and The Story on pgs 13-15?

Hopes & Challenges from English as a Second Language Students

An immigrant English as a Second Language class in Denver volunteered to share some of their stories. This is a collection of their painful, challenging or difficult realities, as well as, their hopes, dreams and aspirations for this reflection journal. Take some deep breaths and center yourself in a place of openness. Read each of these aloud and use the questions on pages 16-17 to reflect on your own story.

Painful, Challenging & Difficult Realities

- The current separation from our families
- Fear of being separated from our families
- Inability to work without papers
- Discrimination by police and non-Hispanics
- Vilification and being feared by others
- Passage of Arizona laws and consideration of similar legislation by other states
- The lack of jobs and opportunities in Mexico and other countries pushes us out of our home countries
- Anxiety over being “found out” or “out-ed”



Dream, Hopes & Aspirations

- Beginning the legalization process to citizenship without having to return to my home country and be separated from my family.
- Applying for a Social Security card and being able to work, pay taxes or receive any tax refund without being afraid or exploited.
- Applying for a driver’s license and being able to drive without fear, insure my car and pay the same insurance rates as everyone else.
- Applying for identification cards and being able to do things like get a library card and check out books for myself and my children.
- Not being harassed by law enforcement based on my appearance.
- Accessing government benefit programs for which we would qualify so we have the same opportunities as other families to grow and to be healthy.

the artist
must fight
for justice & peace



In 2004, my parents and my two little siblings were detained in California. I was left behind, here in Colorado. I remembered that it was summer time, hot like today. I recalled my mother's sad, muffled, yet thinly hopeful voice on the telephone. Our conversations were clipped by tears and sobs. I recalled this very sharp, eerie sensation in my stomach every time I got the phone call. Every time I began hearing her voice. Only her voice.

All the missing parts, combined with the uncertainty were the most painful.

I thought of my mom, my little brother and my little sister not knowing where exactly my dad was. They were separated from the beginning. I never heard from

my dad during that time, because he used his phone card only to call the attorney. My mom tried to assuage me by saying that he was in a nice facility where he could go out to the yard, read magazines and watched TV.

On the contrary, my mom and my siblings were in the shitty center in LA, where during day they only eat the same cafeteria hamburgers, where they had to sit inside a communal jail cell for ten hours to watch the corner TV and to watch other detainees coming and going. They were not even allowed to get out to the yard. If there was one. She tried to reassure me that at night they get to sleep in a comfy room at motel six, where they had nicer beds than they had at home, where they had cable TV and the freedom to choose the TV channel, all while being supervised inside their room by two rotating armed guards.

During one of the phone calls, I told her how i missed her cooking so much and how i was tired of the ramen noodles and eggs for dinner each night. Ironically that was what they'd been having for dinner also. She told me how frustrating it was not knowing

how to get a hold of my dad.

But then she said she was lucky that she at least had my little siblings to cuddle with, whereas my dad had no one. I asked how my brother and sister were doing, and she answered me with this respond that was soon to be my crystallizing image for the entire experience. She said that they were playing cards with the armed guards. A game of go-fish, she said.

I was struck by the absurdity of this image. Two kids, age 10 and 13, sitting around a small table playing card games with the guards who were in charge of detaining them. I don't know if they set bets before hand, and my little siblings happened to place a wager for their release.

Surprisingly, they won. Well, they were lucky. They were detained for two months, then...released.

But our luck took us only so far.

As soon as my parents were released, they had to work overtime. Yet they had their wages garnished because they were in debt to the their employers for bailing them out and for paying the attorney fees. Then the economic crisis cut down their work hours so much they could no longer afford the mortgage payment. We soon lost our house.

But still, we were the few lucky ones. What about the unlucky ones?

What about those who are completely alone? who came here without anybody, knowing nobody, whose bodies were only valued by low wages and abused by hard labor, who are now being systematically lined up in front of

*"Our visions begin with our desires."
~ Audre Lorde*

aloof bureaucrats and waiting to be so easily tossed back, tossed away?

What about the parents who didn't get to see their children when they were captured, let alone cuddled with them? those

who only heard their children's tears as their last frozen memories?

What about lovers who only got to see each other through glass walls? Only hearing each other's distorted voices, and see the lips that can't be kissed, the hairs that can't be felt. Those who could only smell the emptiness of cold air that robbed them from a loved one's familiar scents, those whose most sensible goodbyes are forced by unjust laws, set within tough walls and lit by harsh florescent lights...

What about the trans lovers and the same gender lovin' lovers, who not only were told that they were in a wrong country, that they were on the wrong side of the border, speaking the wrong language, eating the wrong the foods, but also, were told that they were loving the wrong bodies, loving the wrong sex?

I guess it is unlucky to be gay in such a homophobic world it is unlucky to be a migrant in a xenophobic world

it is unlucky to be black, or brown, in a white man's world

just as it is unlucky to be poor in a rich man's world



But who deals these unlucky cards we get? Who sets the rules of the game? If we're losing, then who's winning? who is collecting our bets?

Our bodies should not be bargaining chips to be wagered against, neither should be our sweat, nor our loves...

However many unfortunate losses we've had...those we must keep near. Our deferred dreams, our unfair debts, our wasted sweats, our abused and tired legs, our lost embrace, our abrupt partings... those we must collect in a tank until the pressures of life squeeze them so hard that oil comes out, or rather something like volatile desires.