

A world without dreams and stories
is a world without flowers and trees.

Man can't invent stories or dreams,
But dreams and stories can create the man:
Dreams invoke the visionary with visions,
And stories rouse the dreamer with dreams.

Dreams and stories bloom in the soul:
Dreams shed light on the unknown,
Enlightening the dreamer.
Stories give hope.
Causing the listener to build a better tomorrow
Today.

Dreams and stories have life—
Their own.

Dreams and stories
Free the mind.
The mind frees
The man.

I am Nimrod.
I was a slave.
Today, I am a free man.

The opening words of this memorandum were spoken to me by the wise old man, Papa-horse. The first time I heard them, I was a boy standing at the foot of a mountain, which is life. Today I stand on the mountaintop of life, which is old age. Tomorrow I will descend below the horizon into death, then rise like the phoenix and soar up into heaven. Papa-horse, my experiences, and God taught me that dreams and stories breathe meaning and purpose into a man's life.

My long life and my countless experiences give me much to be thankful for, yet when I look down on the valley of my past I do not see my mother and father. Papa-horse was the only mother and father figure I had ever known. Papa-horse filled my days with stories, God filled my nights with dreams, and both led me to the path and journey that leads to freedom.

Papa-horse taught me that a man will spend hours, days, and years preparing for a trade, his chosen career, his marriage, and his family. But the part of life that needs his greatest preparatory work and deserves special attention before he leaves this world is death. He said, "Death brings the greatest rewards. In death, a man finds the wonderful things he spent a lifetime searching for: unhindered love, the Fountain of Youth, eternal life, milk and honey, and streets of gold. Freedom." I am forever grateful for Papa-horse's wisdom and love.

Many years ago, Papa-horse took me into the woods of Lonesome Bend, our favorite praying place. He sat me on his knee and told me story after story. That summer we sat at the

edge of Dancing Pond with our toes skimming the surface of its cool water. He said, “Son, one man’s hateful and cruel deeds are fed to him by dead dreams. After he dies the world will despise him. Another man’s kind and loving acts are inspired by living stories and dreams. His name is recorded in heaven.

“Although you were born a slave, you have a purpose. And if you’re to live as a free man, you must find that purpose. There’re four things that can help you. Two give purpose to life, and two give freedom. They are dreams and stories and reading and writing. Dreams and stories will give purpose to your life, your reason for being. Reading and writing are the great liberators. They will set your mind and heart free to pursue your purpose.

“No matter what your situation is, dreams and stories and reading and writing will challenge you to live with dignity. Be loving when dealing with others, all people.”

I, Nimrod, have spent a great deal of time searching for keys that will open doors that lead to freedom. Freedom was my right, as it was of all men, and I was determined to have it. My journey to freedom has been tiresome and rewarding, painful and pleasurable. I have sought the keys to freedom not only for myself, but also for all people. Especially you.

You, the reader of my words, up to now do not know me. Yet I know you, and I want you to know me. If this is to happen, it must be soon, as I am old and will be leaving this world, passing from mortality into immortality. Time is no longer a free gift. It has become a commodity that I purchase each day by making right decisions. Though most of my life has been filled with mountainous difficulties, it has also been landscaped with meadows of good. I must share the good and the bad with you.

What I am sharing, I share solely with you. If you will but listen, so as to receive the significance of my message and adapt that significance to your actions, I promise you that you will harvest a bounty of wisdom, wisdom gleaned from my suffering. You will live a life of freedom. You will not have to get all your wisdom from personal pain and suffering. Nor will you have to wait to experience the countless good rewards of heaven, rewards that come from having and using wisdom. Happiness, peace, and freedom will be yours for a lifetime. I beg you, please, listen to me and learn from my long life, from my numerous mistakes, pain, and suffering.

What you are going to read is about me, about my life as a slave and a free man. My words will reveal a man you have not known, but you should know me and uncover a way of life and world that must never return. Expose a past way of life that I pray you will never experience. Expose the place to find freedom at its source.

Why share your experiences with me, you may ask.

And I answer: My reasons are special, very special. But I warn you, reader, beware.

The message of this: My memorandum is going to awaken in you an awareness of the twin beasts that lurk below the surface of consciousness of all men. This information will lure the twins up from their dark abyss of ignorance to the banks of understanding. They will stir you with emotions you have not been in touch with, making themselves known, heard, and felt. As they are exposed to the light of understanding, you will be moved by an uneasiness that heals men of certain ills. So I warn you, be prepared for your odyssey.

The twins are these: prejudice and racism. If you are like me and other men, your mind is now saying, ‘I may be many things, but I’m not a prejudiced or racist person.’

Papa-horse said, “Racism, like all Isms, separates men. And all men are tainted with racism. Discriminating acts based on the belief that one’s race, and family, is naturally superior

to other races, is racism. Men who form opinions about something or someone without first obtaining knowledge or an honest examination are prejudging. To presuppose that a thing is such and such or this or that is, prejudice.”

As always, he was right.

When Papa-horse told me, “You sleep with the twins,” I looked him square in the eyes and declared that his words were untrue. I refused to accept that I, Nimrod, an ex-slave, a black man, could be prejudiced and a racist.

Though that part of me was obvious to Papa-horse, he who knew me best, I did not see myself as a racist. For years I swore I was not. He said, “Nimrod, it is natural for you and all men to feel that your race is better than the other man’s race. It springs from that part of man that tells him that he is different from all others, an individual. Who is the man among men that can say, ‘I’ve never felt that my family, culture, country, or race was better than others?’ Show me that man, and I will quickly tell him, ‘You’re the lucky one among men, and all other men are infernally lost.’” Thus racism becomes unnaturally dangerous when one allows it to be the prevailing feeling that moves him to enslave and kill others unjustly.

Then one day, my disavowed attitude and acts of prejudice and racism were revealed to my full view. I plainly saw that my attitude and actions had been contradicting my words. It was then that I was ready to admit the twin beasts had been a part of my life.

So once more I say to you, my dear reader, be prepared for this journey. It will lead you into the unknown regions of your undiscovered self, to the understanding of all men. The unimaginable and shocking truths about slavery and freedom are going to leap from the past and lay hard against your chest.

The bleakest period of my life has passed, yet the memories of that past are the constant companions that have dutifully inspired me to act at this time. For urgings that I could not bring myself to obey in the past, what I am now doing, contacting you, is what I have wanted to do for more than thirty years. We can never reclaim the years that have slipped past. The few that lie ahead of us, me in particular, we can seize if we will grab them. But we must hold them as if tomorrow will never come.

As Papa-horse’s stories were the sun, and my dreams were the raindrops, and reading was the soil, what I write to you at this time is the Christmas rose that has sprung forth. Please pluck it during your youth from the vine of life and enjoy its fragrance of inspiration before you are as I am, old.

Yes, it is I who bear the blame for not contacting you before now. If you are incensed, as I imagine you are, with my seeming neglectfulness, I understand. Yet I ask your forgiveness. If you will permit me, I wish to take this opportunity to give you an explanation. So I come to you in spirit, on paper, with this, my humble request: Please, I beg of you, please place your hand in mine and walk with me through the arduous years of my past. Mind you, this will not be a Sunday excursion, for it is the life of an African American slave. But I am of the opinion that my painful past will inspire you. It will enlighten your future and fill your days with the healing power of hope.

For the reason that you and I have not walked together down the lane of intimate love, it is with trepidation I ask for your indulgence. Time, change, and different circumstances have delivered into my hands this new and foreboding opportunity. Finally, as decided by destiny, I am moved to share with you that part of me that is more precious than life. A story.

I shall not share just any story, but the one story that you need to hear. Its contents are of great value, and I want you to have it before I leave this world. You, especially you, need to

know this story. Yet, I feel it is better that I refrain from sharing the specifics at this time. I shall share those details towards the end of this writing.

The early years of my life were speckled with constant dread, pain, sorrow, and suffering. I would have you know that America's history (his-story) was written by a handful of her white children. The white men who penned her darkened history on the snowy pages of schoolbooks have not been wholly honest. A fleeting glance of their books tells one, we who survived slavery, that they were less than honorable with their writings.

If you are to have a more completed picture of who you are, how you are to live in this world, and especially what you are, it is high time for you to hear America's history – his-story – from the black experience. America's past, as it flows from the pen of an ex-slave, my pen, my past, and my-story will forthright open your heart and mind to a more complete and truer story.

My-story, which is your past, is based on my opinions, my experiences as a slave, a freed man, and my experiments and experiences with whites. As you read my-story you shall see that I have taken liberty to write freely about my life and the lives of people I knew, holding back nothing. We, blacks and whites, were happy and sad; we loved and hated each other and ourselves. There were times when we were right and times when we were wrong both free and bound. These experiences caused both races to live in both slavery and freedom.

I shall show through my-story that I, the man named Nimrod (who was once a slave who lived in abject poverty and became the free man he had dreamed of being, who came to possess all the material goods he had desired, and was a black man who had always been forever free inside without knowing it), was healed from generational pain and hurt by understanding the unseen causes of the experiences of being a slave who was free and the free man who was a slave.

Thus, I am of the opinion that it is possible for all men, both black and white, to be healed of the ancestral pain and hurt that resides in their broken hearts and damaged souls. And some day, all people will love each other as members of one family, God's family. But as things are today, this will not occur at the present time because of certain written laws, nor will it occur within my generation or yours. Time, the great healer, is in control of this matter, and we must leave this matter to her fixing.

As Papa-horse would say, "A man without a written story is the man who did not exist." These words were spoken when I was a slave and mere boy, a child who did not understand the weightiness of such words. Now that I am an old man, I not only understand his words, but I have also acquired a measure of the freedom that comes with understanding. I can truthfully say that it was his many sayings, stories, and my God-given dreams that delivered me from the stranglehold of personal anger that was great enough to set the world aflame. Stories and dreams have kept me from hating all of my white brothers and sisters. Had I known then what I know today, and had I understood in the past what I understand now, my attitude would have been different. I would have dealt with the obstacles of life with a greater wisdom. I would have reduced the intensity of my anger sooner and saved myself a great deal of unnecessary suffering, the suffering that pours out from the womb of youthful ignorance.

If you will but meet my request with an open mind and a receptive heart your future may not be as painful as my past.

Thus, I write this, THE MEMORANDUM OF A SLAVE, specifically for you.

My Anger

If you are to benefit from my story, it is necessary that you not be alarmed by my anger. It is natural for me, one who was a slave for the greater portion of his life, to be angry. I ask you, please, look beyond the anger, and you will see the hope. Hope is the complete assurance and certitude regarding God's purpose for man, and man's God-given ability and strength to carry out that purpose. It is God's appraisal of godly work. Hope has kept this country afloat. It keeps the world spinning on its axis, forcing men to wake up by way of evolutionary change. The hope that gave the black race the strength to endure slavery was expressed when Papa-horse said, "As the sun is to the flower; without it, the flower dies. So it is with men without hope; their souls wither in pain and die." And my story is about hope.

When I was a child, there was always someone about who told me what to do and when to do it. But as I grew in size and strength, no man could tell me to "Come and do this," or "Go and do that," lest he became the violator who instantly experienced my manliness. I felt I was a free man who should speak freely about whatever was on his mind and whatever came from his heart, most of which was fueled by anger. Now I try to speak as the need presents itself and only say what is required.

Though I believe a man should bridle his anger with compassion, I am also of the opinion that all blacks have the right to feel and vent their inbred anger - as it is a residue of slavery. We are the people who were stolen from our families and native homes in Africa and sold to evil taskmasters in a strange and foreboding land.

Though my outer raiment is as black as the night and my heart pumps the blood of an African ancestry through darkened veins, I have had no