

We Are Alexandria: The People's Poem

Reflections on the City's 275th Birthday

We are the sun, the clouds, the trees, and the river
We are the air and the currents that swirl all around
We are the history remembered, now faced, always felt
We fight for our rights, we stand our ground

Our river's waters run deep, full of languages and stories
We are the hulls of slave ships, some sunken, some buried in earth
We are the human cargo in chains that built this historic city
We embody 275 years of both struggle and rebirth

We are the indigenous peoples, the Dogue and Algonquian-speaking Indians
We've seen colonial times, Civil War and Jim Crow, lynchings, the Movement for Black Lives, and more
We were once a port for commerce, transporting tobacco on the Potomac
A railroad center for the Union, a torpedo factory in the Second World War

Now, we're the West End and the waterfront, Old Town, Chirilagua and Del Ray
Northridge, Rosemont and Potomac Yard, Carlyle, Eisenhower, and Parker Gray
We look up to the Masonic Memorial, we walk streets with royal names
These 15.75 square miles are where we live, work, study, dream, and play

We question and probe, we stand up and raise our fists...
Against discrimination and oppression in the world and in our midst
We understand the connections among all struggles and just causes...
To end wars and protect the vulnerable — we persist, we persist

We are the L and the G and B and T and Q in LGBTQ+
We celebrate children and seniors, men and women, trans folks, all
We are citizens, green card holders, immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers
We've found our home as a community, we pick each other up if one of us falls

We are the interstellar influencer, the 35-million-year-old asteroid that birthed the Chesapeake Bay

We've been known to declare our love with a towering hot pink neon sign
Heavy rains visit us each year, flooding pipes to push sewage into the river
So we brought a massive drill and called it Hazel to dig tunnels and make the water fine

We love pupusas, potato latkes, sushi, biryani, steamed momos, kimchi, and kabab
We use pita, injera, and chopsticks to savor our national foods
We play keberos, djembes, rubabs, and congas, sing gospel, spirituals, and sambas
We bagpipe, dance cumbia and dabkeh, swing to jazz, move to rock, punk, and blues

We're people on boats, bridges, parkways, paved and cobblestone streets
Find us in wheelchairs and cars, on buses, bikes, metro, and trains
Our diverse city is a rock with striations, a rainbow, a fabric of many colors
We're united by living and giving, a search for meaning that never wanes

We are guided by compassion, we insist on truth and equity
These fundamental principles in our city are everyone's birthright
We rise in the east with the sun and moon, continue on their journey
On the arc that bends across the sky toward justice, wisdom, and light

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