

THESE HANDS

(For Mom and Dad)

Travis Holloway

Poetry

These hands built America.
They held the hammers and nails to build our cities.
They wielded pick, shovel and axe to glean the continent's bounty.
They tilled its fertile soil with blood, sweat and tears,
And when the harvest moon was full
They reaped the fruit of their toil to be placed upon our plate.
Roads, rails, bridges, airports and harbors
These hands have paved the path from sea to shining sea.

These hands belong to a dreamer.
When newly formed, they were told of all that they may one day hold.
First baby soft, they gripped pencils, baseballs, and the bicycle horn.
Later, with calluses earned and the vigor of youth,
They reach for that dream they have been told from birth:
All of this can be yours, with a little elbow grease and grit.
These hands have been told that hard work shall reward
And with that belief, they are bent eagerly to the task.

These hands take the shape of life,
One determined by that which they hold.
They are roughened by friction and burned by forge,
Scared from mistakes and failures until twisted to a new form
With which they try so desperately to hold onto the dream.
Before dawn and after dusk, these hands can never be still.
Each day they scratch forward, each night with bloody nails, they dig in.
In the fight for today, they are numb to the years that trickle away.

These hands now hurt.
Bent, scared, buckled and twisted,
These hands can no longer be trusted to provide.
Instead of the tools of worn with the patina of their grip,
They hold back and rub knees that are old
Before their time.
The promise of these hands has been wrung dry
As the dream slips away.

These hands made America, and America made these hands.
So strong, so proud, they have never been extended for charity.
When this country needed a flag to be raised,
An injustice set right, a refuge for huddled masses yearning to be free,
That's when these hands proudly raised for the call.
But when that call has been answered and the day's work has been done,
Where lies the comfort for such hard-working hands?
Where is the balm to gentle their pain?

These hands held America,
And now America needs to hold these hands.
Where is the shoulder to rest these hands upon?
As they stumble towards the night?
Shall their dream prove nothing more than a fantasy?
These hands deserve more than to tremble and hurt.
These hands deserve more than six feet of dirt.
Not so much do they ask –just that which these hands have earned.