

We Are Here

a collaborative poem in response to

"Within" by Louise K. Waakaa'igan

from the Adult English Learners at La Cruz Community Center

We are humans learning English
within God's creation in America,
Saint Cloud, Minnesota.
We are fathers and mothers who are students.
This is not easy. Head hurts. Hard.
Back hurts. Hard, hard.
Are we not meant to be proud, making improvements?

Already we see benefits. Our children can no longer hide
from us behind their perfect English words.
We are learning to understand them.
But we cannot wait for the day
when we can express ourselves better in English.

We hope to speak like our teachers, to read applications
and understand, to write letters, to communicate well
to our American friends.
When will our dreams come true?

Our tears fall down our cheeks into our hands.
Not to be able to articulate to doctors
what our children need—
humiliation.
Sometimes we want to go home to our country.

When will we be understood?

We miss our mothers and fathers back home,
miss the tropical weather of Somalia,
we feel an ache in our hearts,
we feel abandoned.
We older people have lost our friends and country, our culture.

How will our broken hearts ever be mended
without our tribal society?

Who will remember our stories from Somalia
through North Carolina, Buffalo New York,

South Dakota, Willmar Minnesota and into this place?

Children—
we are divided
into separate cars, driven by strangers
to our new place in this new
world.

Parents—
we miss your home.

Neighbors—
we have been afraid.

Allah—
we.
*facilitated by Kelly Travis, Tracy Rittmueller, and Kahin Adam
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