

I Come From

Objective: **I Come From** is a statement of one's origins. It is a look back at one's parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, ancestors as far back as one can imagine. **I Come From** is a tribute to those people's lives and how their lives shaped your life.

I Come From is an essay, a poem, rap, rant, manifesto, or a love song focusing on the importance of knowing and recognizing one's personal history.

I Come From is an homage, a show of respect to the people who struggled, worked, loved, prayed, played, sang, wrote, danced, cooked, moved, fought and survived so that you, the writer, are alive at this moment.

I Come From can focus on your ancestors or your neighborhood. Or wherever it is you feel you come from.

Preparation: Pre-writing non-verbal exercise

Stand up. Imagine you are looking into a mirror. And when you look into that mirror you see your parents standing right behind you. And when you look again, you see your parents' parents standing behind them. And so on and so on backward in time until you envision your ancestors from hundreds and hundreds or thousands of years ago.

Prompts

Here are some questions you might ask yourself and respond to in writing before launching into your piece.

Where do you come from in terms of...

Geography – Where were you born? Your parents? Your grandparents? How far back on both side of your family can you trace your places of origin?

Work/Occupations – What sort of work did your people do to survive?

Food – What are your native foods? And drinks?

Music/dance/literature/myths and legends/poetry/entertainment – were any of these things passed down to you from generation to generation?

Consider other aspects of your culture that were passed down to you. And write about them.

Customs and beliefs/religion

Education

Language

Politics

Clothing

Sports/games

Examples on the following pages.

I Come from Gospel Music Blasting at 4 a.m.

by Glorious Owens

I come from gospel music blasting at 4 am
from my mom speaking in tongues praying for a better life for her kids

I come from snitches get stitches
and I was the main one beaten

I come from hearing gunshots on Century and Hoover
right outside my house
and pressing my face against the tiles
to hold my little sisters to keep them from crying

I come from never letting anybody take my lunch money
and beating down the bullies
to always being in the principal's office
for slapping a kid in class

I come from sports being my only outlet
for the anger I feel for my enemies

I come from staying at my friend's house after volleyball games
because it's too dark to catch the train alone in the hood

I come from feeling like a burden
for being too loud at school and too quiet at home

I come from acting tough in front of other people,
but being scared and childish in front of my family

I come from South Central.

Ghetto by the Sea

by De'Jon Jones

I come from paradise on one street, to the 'hood on the next.

I come from not staying out too late, cause that's playing with your life.

I come from being an athlete by day, and a gang member by night.

I come from where if you make it to see age 18, you've hit a milestone in life.

I come from where guns are an accessory to your outfit.

I come from where sirens and helicopters are a normality in life.

I come from where if you ain't got it, you got to go get it, by any means.

I come from where 90% of us don't have a father figure, and 100% of our mothers worry about if we'll make it back home once we step out of the house.

I come from being harassed by police for being on the good side of Lincoln Blvd, the east side.

I come from where if the police interrogate us, we forget how to speak English.

I come from where we push Venice ShoLine Deuce Gang Crip, that's VSLC 2x and we rep either 5th, 6th, or 7th Ave.

I am from Venice, CA, 90ZOO91, The Ghetto by the Sea

I Come From

by Fernando Garcia

I come from killer California where people die for wearing the wrong colors.

I come from kids selling weed to make a living.

I come from two immigrants who came to LA for a better life.

I come from helicopters shining their lights in my window because they're trying to find the guy they shot down the block.

I come from having three Pitbulls in my house just to make sure no one breaks in.

I come from eating Yoshinoya noodles for a month 'cause my mom wouldn't let me in the house.

I come from kids running away from cops like their lives depended on it.

I come from LA where the sun warms you up, the ocean breeze cools you down, where sirens make you paranoid, and cops take advantage of their authority.

I come from freeways looking like art galleries.

This is why I thank God every morning, because you never know if you'll survive another day in LA.

Proud

By Marcus Anderson

I come from a proud African-American background; my ancestors' struggles paved the path for my generation's success. I fear that this path has been covered with guns, weed, and violence. Hundreds of years of fighting for rights for my people, for what? Weed-smoking gangsters? This is not how Martin Luther King Junior, Malcolm X, or Rosa Parks envisioned the African-American race.

I come from decades of oppression, working all day for no pay. I come from the leather whips used to tear chunks of skin out of the backs of my people. I come from the souls that have been sacrificed for the black cause; through me they live on. I come from the millions who have been denied the opportunity to go to school and become educated; through me they learn. I come from my black women who were raped by white men who impregnated these women then never returned; through me they gain their sense of mind back. I come from liquor storeowners who eyeball young black teens upon walking in for fear that they will steal.

I come from the creation of Soul, Gospel, and R&B. I come from black folk tales told by my ancestors to keep each other encouraged and optimistic while enslaved. I come from a long line of hardworking individuals who made it possible to have a black president. I come from fried chicken, collard greens, cornbread, black-eyed peas, and backyard barbeques with family that feasted on ribs, chicken, beans, beer, and moments that last a lifetime.

What few people know is that I come from an equally proud group of people, Mexican-Americans. I come from grandparents who came to the US as teenagers and weaved something out of nothing. I come from a mother who was raised speaking Spanish and learned English as a second language. I come from homemade posole on Christmas morning after opening our gifts. I come from carrying pounds of masa for the most amazing tamales known to man, my grandma's. I come from the many people out there who are mixed with two incredible races with so much pride.

Venice is Where I Come From

by Joseph Dews

My name is Joseph Dews. I come from a place called Venice, California. People think Venice is a nice place to visit or live but not for us African-Americans.

I grew up in Venice and it's always been rough. I come from a place where you become a gang member or you're an athlete.

Many people choose the streets even though they were good in sports. I come from a place where you can barely go outside at night because of the different gangs.

I admit there's been a time when I chose the streets but I always said, "Where is it going to get me?" By being in the streets I could be six feet under in a quick second. That's why I love when football comes around and why I love this new program I joined at Venice High called POPS.

I come from a place where family members kill their own blood. I come from a place where we will fight for our neighborhood.

I come from a place where "Westside" known as "Los Angeles Department" is always trying to pull a fool over for walking. Many people don't know what I went through and how thankful I am to still be living.

I come from a place where people try to make it out but can't seem to find that path.