

Hands of Another
Nathan E. Say

Abstract: I believe that our biggest battles in the Disabled Community are battles we face with our personal care attendants. This poem was experienced and written during an intense three week period in which I fired and then hired a new attendant. “Hands of Another” are his hands, and are symbolic of any personal care attendant.

Key Words: hands, sacrifice, care

My body exhausted...

A Class skipped, an exam failed; my body parts washed and re-washed, over and over by my useless, deformed hands that inadequately, minimally do the job. Parts missed and neglected, I'm so sorry—I can't reach you, only the hands of another can.

Dreams vanish, room smells, “A's” disappear, a graduate school erased, a Sunday missed, a homework assignment done late, wrinkled clothes worn—the iron too hot for my hands to touch, Only the hands of another can.

My body exhausted—time rolls by, literally without me for days.

Sacrifice given—blessings received, blessings missed, blessings lost, blessings misinterpreted as curses—body exhausted, smelly rooms, disappearing grades, erased graduate schools, missed Sundays, late homework assignments, worn wrinkled clothes—all for the hands of another;

Those hands that go missed and prayed for, longed for. Where are you, hands of another? My body longs for these hands of another; my dreams need these hands of another, my room cries out for these hands of another; my disappearing grades have to be found by these hands of another; graduate schools impressed by these hands of another; Sundays returned by the hands of another; assignments done on time because of them, wrinkled clothes smoothed out gently because of them, the iron vigorously rubbed by them.

The hands of another gone because of blurred boundaries.

My spirit withdraws during separation, I must find another set of hands, another soul; Away with you--be gone hands of another. My disjointed ugly, deformed hands, wish your hands away from my body, and my room and my clothes—but never your spirit, never your laughter, never your tears, or your joy or your sadness, your desire, your dreams, your hopes, just your hands away from me.

Your soul now hot with anger and confusion—stop this madness, this taunting, this name calling—I never wished for your negativity; just your generosity and just your hands. Your absent hands I wanted here;

Your gentle absent hands were away with your spirit... I LONGED FOR BOTH, I COULD NEVER GET BOTH...

Now, can I get your distant spirit sir? Just your distant spirit? No sir, not your hands, just your spirit. Can I get your spirit?

Hands and spirit gone—I am left with my soul, and my useless hands. Me, please tell me how much more I should have given? Should I have sacrificed my exhausted body? Just my smelly room? Just my grades... Its just temporal education. Just my graduate schools—its just grades on paper never to be looked upon by the people that really need to see them. Should I have sacrificed Spiritual self for a completely temporal experience? How many more homework assignments should have turned in late, how many sloppy clothes wearing days should I have had, for one more day with the hands and the soul of another?

NO. NONE I SAY— I DESERVE A BODY, LATHERED, WASHED AND RINSED CLEAN... I DESERVE A ROOM THAT SMELLS LIKE A GOOD EXPERIENCE. GRADES THAT I EARNED BECAUSE MY SOUL HAS BEEN TOUCHED BY THE HANDS OF ANOTHER THAT'S WORTHY TO SEE MY SOUL. I DESERVE TO PICK THE GRADUATE SCHOOL I WILL ATTEND, NOT JUST GO TO THE ONLY ONE THAT WILL TAKE ME. I DESERVE A SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE. I DESERVE TO DO MY HOMEWORK ON TIME, I DESERVED IRONED CLOTHES

Yet, I still long for that soul and those hands of another, one reunited if only but for a brief month, or a year, or two years, or five. Until the sacrifice comes, and the washings stop, the clothes get wrinkled, my room smells.

I need your presence near me, can I just have your presence?

Nathan Say graduated from Brigham Young University-Hawai'i in December, 2006, with a Bachelor's Degree in History, and has Cerebral Palsy and various learning disabilities as a result of a premature birth. An active member of the Disabled Community, Nathan is working on turning his private collection of disability related poetry into a public collection widely accessible to the Disabled Community and beyond.