

Tolle Graham – Two Poems

Every Tree is Me

My feet used to run bare footed.
Rough cement sidewalks, uneven seams -
pebbles
hurt at the beginning of summer.
Then, hardened
they challenged turf
but still allowed for the tickle of grass.

My feet, like trees –
are roots and foundation.

Planted for
growth, stability
longevity,
I now plant myself carefully
held by each footprint
in the world as an aging walking woman.

For how long?

Like roots, my feet seek place.
Gnarled with twisted toes
and knotted joints -
there are threats.

Trunk - spine
swirled, bulging
no longer straight;
rivulets of life sustaining veins
map the course for both of us -
me and tree.

Silent story tellers
we are:
scars, burls, carved initials and tattoos, rotted hollows -
places where parts of us once were.

Look at me!
What can you tell about me
with your own memory stories?

Leon

Remember this my friends--
when Leon was no longer breathing
- but dead?

Curled up, he was
for a nap.
Cozy and peaceful,
as if still there
--- Leon?

How long were you still there?
Cool to touch, still soft
but can't sing,
can't tell us about
secrets of the ancient Egyptians,
math, Shakespeare.

There is space around you -
so we curl up and get close.

We breathe for you.

Our group grief--
turning joyful
we sing your-words-to-you Leon.

We plant a flower in your shirt pocket
and tuck a butternut squash
under your arm
carefully stored from the garden bounty
in the cool closet nearest to you.

Tolle Graham has lived in Jamaica Plain, MA for more than 40 years where she and her husband raised three sons. Everyone in her immediate family writes: letters to the editor, proposals, essays, speeches and even one novel! She is a member of the Mission Hill Women's Writing Group (MHWWG).. She believes that there is nothing like the encouragement and inspiration found sitting around the table (and through ZOOM) with this diverse group of older women. They write and share their work with the community in public readings and self-published booklets- *From our Notebooks (Vol. 3,4,5): Essays, Stories and Reflections* available at the Parker Hill Public Library. Tolle and others in the MHWWG recently published poems as part of a community collaboration with the Boston Camera Club photo banner exhibition in Boston's Seaport District: *The Focused Eye: Our Unique Views*. It is open to the public until Nov. 2021 and available online at www.bostoncameraclub.photos.