



*Christian Farris*

**Winner of the Kurt Wilt Prize  
for Student Writing in Nonfiction**

Dear Friend

How can you say that we belong to you, and yet we don't? I mean, what happened to us is a tragedy. You promised a city upon a hill, but all I was greeted with was a passage of indescribable horrors. Your Great Emancipator, as you hailed him, told you that we are one people who can make even former enemies friends, yet we, the most faithful of workers were an obstacle preventing unity. How messed up is that? I thought we had this indescribable bond, that after all that forced labor giving you a destiny to manifest, we'd finally receive our forty acres and a mule.

Lies, friend, it's nothing more than a paradise lost to us, which is funny considering how we have been treated with burning of crosses and hanging fruit with blood on the leaves. Isn't it amazing how our beliefs changed us? You turned over your prodigal son to the Klan, while for me, our prophet became the foundation for an X and the Nation. Maybe I do belong to your Bible in that I remind you of your original sin and that symbiotic connection is what will result in this relationship we have, friend. I loved you, I honestly did, and I know in a perfect world you and I could perhaps belong together, but we don't live in that world. What a dream, huh? Though I feel it's maybe a waste of time to talk like this, as we come from radically different backgrounds, and perhaps this is something out of the Montague and Capulet feud just with fewer stabbings and more shootings.

I mean, look at it this way, friend—Sinatra told you he wants to wake up in the city that never sleeps, yet Nas tells me that he doesn't sleep in the rotten apple cause it's the cousin of death. You've got my people out here yelling they're Ready to Die, so was this the dream the great King promised us back in

1963? Perhaps what both of us need to do is be honest and look at what's going on between the two of us. I mean, we talk about it from time to time, but I feel that you lack the primal rage that comes from within towards the feud. This goes deeper than a blood feud; this is a genocidal war. Maybe I'm dramatic, but every single day feels like a war on a culture that has been just trying to earn the right to struggle in this country for over 400 years. I sometimes wonder if we are descendants of Cain and that is the reason we have been on the receiving end of such malice.

Now, what I have been saying has probably upset you just like last time, but at least it's not as public as Charlottesville. I see you trying to understand now more than ever the opposite side of the conflict, and while I know you aren't directly responsible—at least that's what the Savior story tells you—I can't help but wonder what will come of us when this war reaches its apex, especially since you are the apex. To me, this is our Easter, you see, and I thought it made sense considering that we are only a couple years removed from that bloody year that ends in 16. I hate you, yes, but I do love you since we were birthed here, although I am the stranger and still must stand and show allegiance to the colors red and blue. Still, the red and blue we pledge to bleeds a little closer to home, and there's an absence of white unless it's the white that through you is ravaging my neighborhood. I feel that I want to win this race you created, but maybe not.

No, I don't want to win this race. I want to destroy this race at its core, friend. I wish for no one ever to be told they are second-class due to being a child of Cain or bearing the curse of Ham. I want everyone to be protected and served, not for some to be served a Whopper after a massacre and others a bullet while eating ice cream. I guess I do want you to burn and me to burn with you. Maybe that's where we both belong, and from those embers something brighter and more beautiful than we could ever imagine can be born.