

BELONGING BEGINS WITH US

**A San Mateo County Welcoming Week
Community Poem**

**As you walk outside on your first morning here
put out seed, and see what comes near.**

**A dove, a rose, a redwood tree.
Gaze upon a new light**

**another wonderful adventure
a new welcoming page.**

**Sing songs in your mother tongue
We will play music to it. There is a place for you,**

**a wide window with a view toward the western hills:
needlegrass, monkeyflower, coast live oak, red tailed
hawk.**

**Like a shooting star in the nighttime sky,
go ahead, make a wish.**

**You may long for home, but you will soon find
that home can also be here. We embrace you**

**and everything that you bring: your customs,
your food and music, your smiles, your heart.**

**Think not of the veins of this outstretched hand
as dead ends but as living rivers.**

**Before you arrived we thought we knew
who we were, but now we know**

**we are more than we dreamed.
Let me feel what you remember**

**and I will go the way you came.
I wait, my extended hand a poem, replete**

**with petals of love, stems of growth, vines of hope.
Would you like to eat lunch with me?**

**Would you like to join my family
for Thanksgiving celebration?**

**Sharing a meal is how we nurture
relationships, celebrate achievements,**

mend conflicts and feel gratitude for life.

To the abuelita on 5th Avenue, you are the building block

of my community and corazón.

To my fellow neighbors: share your kindness,

**share your support, and extend belonging
to those who only just arrived. Be the first**

**to provide dignity, safety, and grace
in these times of migration, disruption**

**and hard choices. We all know how it feels
to be excluded. We all have the power**

to help others belong in our communities.

From the first day a new resident moves here,

they are part of our family.

Here, we shelter the poor, remember the forgotten.

Every stranger becomes a prospect for friendship.

Our tiny planet is but a small, swirling speck

of cosmic dust with even tinier occupants

bumping into each other, seeking shelter, better weather.

**Kapwa ko, I give you harbor, armor, anchor.
Here is where you can start over. Belonging begins with us.**

**¿Qué ondas? Ya comiste?
Vamos a comer a mi casa.**

**Welcome, welcome home. Herete means to rejoice!
Staray Ma Shay. We're glad to have you.**

**Shalom, Salam, Pas, Amani, Vrede, paco, peace.
Thank you for being here.**

Please ask for anything you need.

May each bright dawn bring you peace, bring

**family and memory, hummingbird, hawk. May
the surf be a heartbeat, steady as home.**

Curated by San Mateo County Poet Laureate Aileen Cassinetto as part of the San Mateo County Office of Community Affairs Immigrant Services' Welcoming Week 2021 Program

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