



April 9, 2025
A Note from Amma Jackson

Dear Friends,

“Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored;
renew our days as of old.”
Lamentations 5:21

It was in the late hours of July 12, 2013, when it finally dawned on me: I am leaving the place I’ve called home all my life — my family, my friends, and everything I’ve known since birth.

As I sat in the airport with my husband, Andrew, I was deep in thought. I had heard and read about racial disparities and restrictive immigration policies in the United States, but despite the mixed emotions, I was determined to embrace this new chapter of my life.

I had been accepted into the University of Maine Graduate School program, and I was excited and grateful for the opportunity. As a Black African woman moving to a predominantly white state like Maine, my heart raced with anxiety and uncertainty about the future.

Arriving at our small campus apartment on July 13, 2013, felt like a fresh beginning. As we unpacked and tried to settle in, we heard a knock on our door.

A young white couple stood outside our apartment, and with a beaming smile and much excitement, the lady said “Hi, I’m Alyssa and this is my husband Nate. We live next door and just wanted to welcome you to UMaine.” This marked the beginning of a beautiful friendship. (Here’s Andrew & Alyssa making lasagna.)



Alyssa and Nate had also moved to Maine from California for school. Nate had just completed his first year of grad school, and I learned so much about the UMaine system from him.

We all spent time together cooking, listening to Nate play his guitar, shopping, and just enjoying each other's company. Meeting Alyssa and Nate was one of the best things that could have happened to us. They were like guardian angels, helping us navigate the unfamiliar territory of this new experience. Their genuine kindness made us feel right at home.



We also discovered a wonderful church community at the Old Town United Methodist Church (our son Nathan was baptized there). The generosity and support we received were truly uplifting.

They provided transportation, shared essentials, and embraced us with love. Diane and her family created unforgettable Thanksgiving experiences, while Pastor Dan and his family offered warm conversations

and joyous Christmas Eve celebrations. Sue (pictured below) became a mother figure to me, and Ralph and his family gifted us with cherished summer memories. This list could go on and on.

These acts of kindness transformed my anxieties and fears into a profound sense of hope. Our newfound friends welcomed us wholeheartedly and embraced our differences.

As I reflect on my journey and the stories of others who have come to the United States seeking refuge or new opportunities, I cannot help but consider the struggles that many have encountered and continue to face.

Not everyone has been fortunate enough to experience the warm and welcoming embrace that we received.



I find myself lamenting the instances of racial disparities and profiling that persist in our communities as well as immigration policies that have led to the separation of families and caused distress among immigrant communities. While a lot of progress has been made to curb these issues, there is still much work to be done.

My family visited Hilliard UMC when we moved to Ohio in 2017 because of the welcoming experience we had in Maine. We've stayed at HUMC because of the core values upheld by this kind and inclusive community. HUMC exemplifies what it means to be a good neighbor.

I am very proud to be part of a community that has developed several outreach programs and has made a commitment to engage with the broader community. This is a community that creates spaces and opportunities for children and adults to grow, participate in acts of kindness, and learn to be good neighbors.

I arrived in the United States filled with doubt, fear, and uncertainty. Thanks to the incredible people and communities I encountered along the way, however, I now find myself in a position to give back and be the welcoming presence that someone else may need.

Let us hold onto our shared calling to embrace our neighbors with open hearts and kindness.

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