

Scientists say that a rock

is a naturally occurring solid aggregate of one or more minerals,

and that the three major groups of rocks are defined as igneous, sedimentary, or metamorphic.

But I also heard that rocks are made of stories

and I asked myself,

if rocks are made of stories,

and my mother began mine,

then what kind of rock is she?

How many stories does it take to fill a rock?

How many rocks does it take to fill a mountain?

How many mountains does it take to reach the sky?

There are many rocks in my life.

Each one, a stepping stone towards knowing all the layers of me.

It is the hand of my mother that used to rock my cradle.

My father's laughter is like gravel,

the kind of sound that was never smooth but you loved to hear it grumble.

My sister eyes

are smooth as two skipping stones that never end

and now my baby nephew,

is a growing pebble of joy,

I am learning the art of collecting rocks,
of stopping to notice them and appreciating their beauty.

Each one teaches me a different lesson.

Each one holds a different story that deepens my grasp of how we are all molded.

I've been given gems with the responsibility of turning them into amulets

and I sat here for days,
thinking, how could I possibly use the metaphor of rocks
to navigate the experience of American prison camps?

And I realized

that Executive Order 9066 had the power of Medusa
and once the law looked into this country's eyes
120,000 Japanese nationals and Japanese Americans were turned to stone.

And I can't help but feel helpless,
staring into the memoirs of a forgotten generation
wondering what I can do to preserve the fossils hiding inside this country's closet?

What to do with biographies that don't belong to us?

How long should we keep a jewel before giving it back to the world?

The formation of a rock takes time and pressure.

They are held together by chemical bonds.

These rocks have become my foundation,
they will hold me up until I decay beneath a tomb.

I have no choice but to use the lessons of this earth to form my own story
and have faith that my burning passion will cool into a tale to tell my children.

Imagine all the gems I can leave with those around me.

Imagine all the homes we can build with all the rocks we leave behind.

I will honor these stories.

I will become the gravity that holds every layer together.

I will let my smile become sedimentary
so everybody knows where it's chiseled from.

Rocks have been used by mankind throughout history.

They have been essential to human civilization.

They have been used for tools,

for instance, I use my mother to kindle the fire inside of me,

I use my father to hunt down my insecurities,

and now I'm learning how to use the experiences of Japanese internees

to sharpen my understanding of what it really means to be

American.