From Poetry to Prose

You’ve written two poems thus far—the “Where I’m From” piece, and either the “Litany” piece (“I remember…”) or the “Heritage” poem. For this first paper, I’d like you to write the essay version of one of the two poems.

- If you choose to work with the “Where I’m From” poem, try an autobiographical essay that describes for the reader the roots from whence you came. Where/who/what are you from, and how do your roots still live in you?
- If you choose to work with “Litany,” write an autobiographical essay that looks back on a particular event in your history that shaped you. Tell the story of what happened, and suggest, perhaps, how that event has played itself out through the rest of your life.
- Finally, if you work with “Heritage,” write an autobiographical essay that tells us about the people who made you. Who shaped you, and how?
Some Guidelines:

- The paper should be in the realm of 3 pages. No fewer than 3, no more than 5.
- As in the poem, focus on concrete details, but this is an essay, so provide us with some sort of introductory paragraph, some pathway into the material, some surrounding frame. This does not have to be as rigid as a thesis paragraph, with an identifiable thesis statement, but give us an entryway.
- Likewise, write your way toward a conclusion. You likely won’t know where it will conclude when you begin, but you’ll know when you get there.
- Work with details/images, as you did in the poems, but this is prose—write with some sort of chronological sensibility. Tell us the story, and lead us through it via concrete details.
- Consider the poem a sort of first draft for the paper. You’ve laid down details and a frame. How can this translate into prose?
- No quotational evidence or citations needed in this paper.

Mechanics:

- Write in complete sentences, and use conventional punctuation.
- Use paragraphing—one developed idea per paragraph.
- Proofread and check spelling.
- Double-space and paginate.
- Name and date at the top left of page 1.
- Staple before handing in the paper.
- I highly recommend using the Writing Center. You will find the staff extraordinarily helpful, whether you consider yourself a strong or a weak writer.