**Where I’m From Poem Exercise**

From *Twelve Lies That Hold America Captive and the Truth That Sets Us Free* by Jonathan P. Walton

This “Where I’m From” poem exercise will help you explore your cultural identity and share it with those around you. Don’t try too hard to be poetic or cool or compare yourself to other people. Just tell the truth about your childhood background, and then share it with at least one other person. Then listen to their poem. Feel free to fill in the blanks and use the prompts, or go off script if you get inspired—just as long as the listener gets to know you and you get to know yourself.

I am from \_\_\_\_\_ (traditions that remind you of home),

from \_\_\_\_ (brands – clothing, products, labels commonly used growing up)

I am from \_\_\_\_\_ (food you ate growing up and holidays you grew up celebrating).

I am from \_\_\_\_\_ (favorite childhood activities, books you remember most, toys you collected),

from \_\_\_\_\_ (family member’s names or names of people who took care of you).

I am from \_\_\_\_ (plants/gardens that grew inside/outside your home),

from \_\_\_\_\_ (sounds, touch, scents that remind you of home).

I am from \_\_\_\_\_ (names of the places your parents are from),

from \_\_\_\_\_ (names of places where you’ve lived).

I am from \_\_\_\_\_ (phrases you’ve grown up listening to and superstitions/traditions/oddities your parents/guardians always used).

I am from \_\_\_\_\_ (activities, adjectives, descriptions that you think best describe your interests growing up).

I am from \_\_\_\_\_ (faith traditions, faith journey, spiritual discoveries),

from \_\_\_\_\_ (doubts, struggles with faith).

I am from \_\_\_\_\_ (phrases or words that remind you of a significant struggle you went through),

from \_\_\_\_\_ (phrases or words that remind you of great joys in life).

I am from \_\_\_\_\_ (favorite quotes, mottos you hold dear).

I am \_\_\_\_\_ (your name).

After you listen to someone share, express your appreciation for their sharing their story with you. If you have questions, ask them in humility, not judgment or condescension. Some of the thoughts shared may have been sentimental and were definitely personal. Here are some sentence stems that may help ask good questions:

* I was puzzled when I heard \_\_\_\_\_. Could you tell me more about that?
* What did you mean when you said \_\_\_\_\_?
* Could you tell me more about \_\_\_\_\_?

If you share your poem with us on social media, please use the hashtag #whereimfrom.