

LEARNING EXCHANGE PROTOCOL
Personal Narrative
This Is Not a Small Voice

Sonia Sanchez

Sonia Sanchez is an American poet, writer, and professor. She was a leading figure in the Black Arts Movement and has authored over a dozen books of poetry, as well as short stories, critical essays, plays, and children's books. *Wounded in the House of a Friend* (1995).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5JxMXZVafKk>

(Sonia Sanchez talking about learning to become a poet.)

This is not a small voice
you hear this is a large
voice coming out of these cities.
This is the voice of LaTanya.
Kadesha. Shaniqua. This
is the voice of Antoine.
Darryl. Shaquille.
Running over waters
navigating the hallways
of our schools spilling out
on the corners of our cities and
no epitaphs spill out of their river
mouths.

This is not a small love
you hear this is a large
love, a passion for kissing learning
on its face.
This is a love that crowns the feet with
hands
that nourishes, conceives, feels the
water sails
mends the children,
folds them inside our history where they
toast more than the flesh
where they suck the bones of the
alphabet

and spit out closed vowels.
This is a love colored with iron and lace.
This is a love initialed Black Genius.

This is not a small voice
you hear.

While the poem speaks mainly to African American young people, you can substitute any student's name for the person in the poem.

Think of a young person whose story you carry with you, who has touched you in a special way, whose voice is not a small voice inside your head whenever you need encouragement or a reminder of why you are who you are doing what you do.

What is about the young person that stays with you and motivates you to do work on behalf of all young people?

Discuss this with your EC-NIC group. Put that young person's name on your poster. When you are finished, turn back to the group; each person will call the young person's name into the space. All will answer PRESENTE.