

# Gadfly reads Whitman

The Bethlehem Gadfly Arts, the, Local Color June 26, 2019

*a kelson of the creation is love*

*Of every hue and caste am I*

*I will not have a single person slighted or left away*

*I speak the pass-word primeval, I give the sign of democracy,*

*By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart of  
on the same terms.*

*Walt Whitman*

Jefferson taught us that “all men are created equal.”

Whitman made us feel it.

Walt Whitman, “the poet of democracy.”

And no poem more central to that role than his “[Song of Myself](#).”

Whitman’s self encompasses and embraces everybody.

Everybody.

And not because of law but of love.

“The kelson [the undergirding] of the creation is love.”

Whitman loves everybody, sees the godlikeness in everybody.

Gadfly recorded “Song of Myself” recently [for the Bethlehem Area Public Library](#).

It’s a long poem.

But a few of the sections might be especially pertinent as you take in the stories from the Southwest border this morning — and the image of the drowned father and daughter.

section 5:

And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,

And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own,

And that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and the women my sisters and lovers,

And that a kelson of the creation is love

section 16:

Of every hue and caste am I, of every rank and religion,

A farmer, mechanic, artist, gentleman, sailor, quaker,

Prisoner, fancy-man, rowdy, lawyer, physician, priest.

section 19:

This is the meal equally set, this the meat for natural hunger,

It is for the wicked just the same as the righteous, I make appointments  
with all,

I will not have a single person slighted or left away,

The kept-woman, sponger, thief, are hereby invited,

The heavy-lipp'd slave is invited, the venerealee is invited;

There shall be no difference between them and the rest.

section 24:

Whoever degrades another degrades me,

And whatever is done or said returns at last to me.

Through me the afflatus surging and surging, through me the current  
and index.

I speak the pass-word primeval, I give the sign of democracy,

By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart of  
on the same terms.

section 40:

To cotton-field drudge or cleaner of privies I lean,

On his right cheek I put the family kiss,

And in my soul I swear I never will deny him.

Whitman, a capacious appetite for every flavor of humanity.

Whitman, literally embodying and espousing a love for all.

Perhaps add [Gadfly reading Whitman](#) to your breakfast menu this morning.