





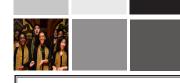






Newsletter of the Kuumba Singers of Harvard College Established 1970 Fall 2018





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VOICES

President's Letter

Good evening Alumni, Family, and Friends,

When I think of home, I think of the smell of the ocean. I think of laughter and Sunday mornings. I think of my brothers and I imitating our parent's accent into the wee hours of the night. I think of the fables and stories that were used to teach us morals and life lessons.

The concept of home varies between individuals; no two people's definitions are exactly the same. To some, home is a physical place in which many cherished and sweet memories have been made. To others, home is a group of people—a chosen collection of faces who have laughed and loved and cried with them more times than they can even remember. And then, there are those who have never seen or experienced home. For them, home is a dream not yet experienced; it's still to come. No matter how you may be defining home at this moment in your life, there is a singular thread that runs throughout our idiosyncratic definitions of home: freedom.

Throughout my life, I have had the opportunity to live in multiple places, which has been a blessing— and an interesting challenge. This frequent shifting has forced me to question, define, and redefine what it means to be "home" more times than I have room to share. And for those of us who are rooted in the African Diaspora, this dilemma— this feeling of being both unsure and unsettled— is all-too familiar.

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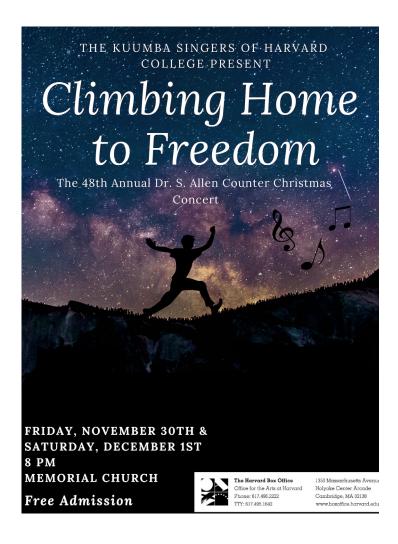
What is our home? That's the question many black people have been forced to grapple with for centuries. After all, the African Diaspora is, by definition, the product of centuries of violent displacement. Many of our ancestors were taken from their homes— captured and forced to toil on unfamiliar land. Others were forced to flee in the wake of war, genocide, and colonialism.

Regardless of how Black people were separated from their homes, none of them left empty-handed. They were all determined to carry a piece of home with them— a morsel of their culture, a taste of their tradition, a whiff of their spirituality. Torn from their family members, they created and cultivated new families with people from different tribes and traditions. And many of them came to find solace and strength in the story of a baby refugee who was born into a world that had no home for him. Though they still longed to find and return to their true home, they danced and sang and clapped and stomped their feet in order to evoke and approximate a sense of residence. They used music and art to access an exhilarating and forbidden freedom. Their songs and poems and dances allowed them to lose sight of their present circumstances and imagine, if just for a fleeting few moments, what it felt like to be home again— and free.

Thus, it is in the spirit of this sacred tradition that we invite you to join us as we search for our freedom– which is true home– through song, dance, and spoken word. May you leave this concert more inspired and determined to climb home to your freedom than ever before.

With Kuumblove,

AudreyStephannie Maghiro



Tributes to Home

The following word clouds were made using answers from current Kuumbabes.

Where is home?



What is home to you?



A Cherished Land

Francesca Judy Noelette '19

It is a land of beauty.
At the mound, dark willows curl,
Swaying in the breeze of a north wind.
Below, the soil is a rich coffee,
Fertile and soft.
To the east and west, there are gullies.
They may be dark, but they are smooth and glisten as though carved by rivers of oil.
At the center, there lies a valley,
Pink and lush.

Here is where I've taken up residence. I've sheathed myself in its warmth. I relish in the dampness, Thick and heavy in the air It seems to coat me, Covering me, Covering me in love.

So, I dance in the valley, Just a little to-and-fro. Yes, I dance in the valley In an outpouring of sheer pleasure, Of sheer happiness.

I cherish this land.
I cherish it,
Each and every inch.
I cherish it.
This is my land.
This is my place.
This is my home.

OUTCAST

Anonymous

I grew up in California,

I lived on the end of a cul-de-sac

I played on the trampoline

I enjoyed the summer sun

Life was good to me.

In my humble abode, resided my family and I

I was home.

But was I?

Did the incessant and monotonous schedule define itself to be home?

Did the zip codes of the place where my family and I lied sleep night and night again etch itself into my skin?

Somehow, the 310s, 562s, 781s, all became more familiar than muscle memory

and the creation of home ensued.

But how can you call home a place where you feel alone?

Wasn't home supposed to bring warmth?

I'm almost certain home came with the promise of sanity?

Were those who claimed home was where you fulfill the perfect spot in a puzzle piece of lives lying?

I sit here, in my dorm room at Harvard, in a city foreign to me,

and I can't discern the difference

I switched coasts in the aims of finding a new me

Of discovering a real meaning to the word home

But even here I feel as if this world has never been more harsh.

I lack the feeling of belonging,

I yearn to fit

But I've always been a trapezoidal peg in a circular spot

So I claimed home in myself

It is not the place,

It is not where your heart is

It is not even you yourself

But rather where you chose it to be.

Chose to fully be you,

And you wont have to search for a hole to fill,

or a family to love,

For they've already been painstakingly, perpetually,

trying to find you.

Nke Ano: The Time I Sat As the Fourth

Pamela Adaugo Nwakanma, PhD Candidate, Government

This piece of writing is a slight mixture of Ngwa, an Igbo dialect, and Central Igbo

Nne nne nne m si na "a si la a no m n'akpá nari na ano" O bu otu o si akowa afo ya maka odighi onye ma mgbe a muru ya kpomkwem I no n'akpá bu otu o si akowa nari O bu okwu ndi mgbe ochie. Okwu ndi laghachiri n'ala ndi nna nna ma na nne nne m, Mama Lucky, puru iche o laghachibeghi n'ala ahu Chineke kpebiri ido ya maka anyi.

Otu ubochi, a norom n'ihu ogbo ato ndi di n'ihu m Ogbo ato umu nwaanyi Umu nwaanyi nke na echetara m nzube m ebe a na uwa nke a na-emeghari anya I no n'ihu ha bu ezigboto ngozi Ųdį ngozi mmadu nwere ike ileghara anya mana ma mmadu jikwa obi ekele icheta oge ngozi ndi a Oge ngozi ndi a na- ahapu ihe nketa na mkpuru obi

Otu nne nne nne m na- akowa afo ya dabere na otu a gwara ya.

Anaghi amacha onye bu "a" ma na eziokwu putara ihe bu na izu nke ogbo izu nke a na enyere aka iduzi m na uwa nke a Uwa nke a ebe mmadu kwesiri ichebe obi ya n'ihi na site na ya ka nputa nile nke ndu di

Ebe o bu na aga m na echeta mgbe m nweriri oge a gozimara agozi

oge a mgbe anoduru m di ka nwaanyi nke ano n'ihu ogbo this wisdom that serves as a guiding light ato mbu

n'ihu nne m n'ihu nne nne m n'ihu nne nne nne m

Amaara m na uwa m, uwa m nke puru iche, bu ndu nke Chineke kwadoro

Somewhat interpretive English translation

In the words of my great grandmother, "they said that I am 104 years old" that is her way of describing her age

because there isn't anyone who can really say when she

this is her unique way of saying one hundred

this the language of the past

the language of those who have returned to the land of the ancestors

but my great grandmother, Mama Lucky, is also unique unique like her way of describing her age She is yet to return to that land

God the creator has decided to keep her for us.

That day, I was in the presence of the three generations before me

three generations of women

Women

who remind me of my purpose here

in this deceptive world

To be in their presence is indeed a blessing

the sort of blessing that could easily be taken for granted but when approached with a heart of gratitude

leaves an eternal imprint on the soul

my great grandmother describes her years based on what "they" tell her

It is never quite clear who the "they" are This they that seems to always know things but what is clear is the generational wisdom in this world where one needs to guard their heart this heart from which the issues of life flow

As long as I remember the blessed moment That moment when I sat as the fourth in the presence of the preceeding three

in the presence of my mother my grandmother my great grandmother

I know that mine is set apart set in the palms of the creator of life

Displaced

Voices

Zoë Towler









Photos by Zoë Towler

Palestine, a place many call(ed) home but few find safety and comfort. Oh, for a place to be home today and stripped from fingertips tomorrow. Olive trees ripped from the ground, like bodies ripped from family.

Land, a mysterious thing – is it truly ever home?

Blood dripping into the ground growing deep roots of evil from the conquest.

We see it here, we see it now, we see it clear Will this place feel like home again?

We plead with our conquerors let us enter again.

It is my home. I call it home.
I called it home. It is not home.
I called it home. It is not home.
Displaced. Dismayed. Destroyed.
Our land may be destroyed but our hearts are not.
You cannot strip my home from my heart. It is here. It is I. It is We.
No where to call home, land stripped from our fingertips brought to another land that is not our own, where is home?

Home is you. Home is us. Home is we. Longing for something deeper. Rooted in us, in unity, in community.

To First-Year Ata

Ata Amponsah '19

*Note: A benefit to being in Kuumba is being at Convocation every year. ("Benefit" might not be the right word; I'll leave it here for lack of a better one.) Dean Khurana always says in his speech to the first-year students that Harvard is our home. Whether he means for the duration of our time at Harvard or for the rest of our lives, I don't know; but I know that "home" doesn't always feel like home. I think we associate positive feelings with home or what home should be, and my feelings toward Harvard haven't always been positive. Indeed, they aren't all positive now. This poem, written in August, is my attempt to (concisely) reconcile these feelings to what I've been told is supposed to be my home.

There will be bad days
Days when you won't want to leave your bed
Days when you won't want to leave your room
Days you won't want to go to class
See your friends
Go to work
Do what you have to do
Do much of anything

There will be days you will regret your decisions
Days you will regret coming here
Days you'll wish you could take the last three years back
Days you'll wish you'd gone somewhere else
Anywhere else
Anywhere but here
Days when you'll hate everyone around you
Even the ones who you normally like
Days you won't be happy
You'll feel like a prisoner
You'll count the days left on your sentence

But there will also be good days
Days when you'll want to jump out of bed
Days when what you will do will excite you
Days you'll love the things you do
Love the people you'll do them with
Love what you're learning
Days you'll want to take on the world
Days when you won't want to change a thing
These will be days you'll—word to Drake—like who you're becoming
Days when you'll like where you're headed
Days you'll feel you're exactly where you're supposed to be

Days you'll feel you're at home
Days when you'll love where you are
Who you are
Who you're around
Days when you'll love how you spend your time
Days you'll want to savor every fleeting moment
Days you'll want to last longer
Last forever
There will be bad days, and there will be good days.
I hope you have more good days than bad.

Jacksonville, Florida

Ayanna Dunmore '19

Home to me is summer thunderstorms, Walking barefoot over tile floors, And feeling the sun's heat on my shoulders.

Home to me is Spanish moss sweetly hanging from the trees, Long bike rides, And the sound of cicadas at sunset.

Home to me is walking on the beach, Feeling the sand rub against my toes, And water. So much water.

Home to me is my mom's hugs, My father's stories, And my sister's jokes.

Home to me is green and hot and sticky Rarely perfect But as familiar as the sound of my cat purring.

Home to me is like my footprints disappearing in the sand, A faded memory I am always running from, But keep finding my way back.

Camouflaged in Showers

Andrea Bossi '21

I had no idea these saline jewels Sought refuge in the conversation I was yet to have because In my words, there was my pain.

Pain that calcified Pain that builds in layers In this conversation, brushing only my pain's crust I felt something stirring, so I ran hiding, politely.

I ran from that room, running after myself
I ran down Mass Ave. at walking pace
My twinkling refugees that had one breath of air
Had become reckless for their liberation.

The street lights and reflections of light Were blurry through my rain like night blindness
The lump of fire in my throat
Dared me to be silent in the city.

Showers began, I surrendered my irises to the wet sidewalk Swallowed the lump to my stomach, letting it burn hunger away Shuffled quivering hands into my pockets like vines seeking stability Subdued my breath in the water I was drowning.

> Camouflaged in cold rain, I know When I get to that temporary room that is "home" No warm body nor beating heart will embrace my body A wildfire is raging murder against my soul.

> > I just want to go home.

Voices Voices

Dear Dad

Gabriel Wadford '21

I want to fall in love.

No I want to do more than just fall in love.

If a father's fury could be inherited, I thought surely I'd glow red. Like the apple fallen not far from the tree, Bruised yet ripe with vengeance and indignation.

But I mistook my ripeness, For the pulp of my soul was sweet. Sweet with forgiveness for those who were neither asking nor deserving of it. For you.

For this, I thank you.
Your barbed words and balled fists
Cracked the hull of my being, but
Oh how wonderfully light shines through the broken.

Fall

Chinaza Ochi '19

I want to drown in love.

I want to be fully immersed, hard to breathe, shivering type of love.

I want to be consumed in a I can't live without you kind of love
Fire burning, passions blazing, the calm to my storm sort of love
A love that fills the deepest crevices of my heart
An "I see you" type of love
I understand you
I want your type of love for more than just your body, but for your mind, your laugh, your soul
I want a "I'm willing to wait" sort of love
Minutes, hours, days, moons
A love that spans the ages yet still remains timeless
I don't want to just fall in love
I want a love I can bleed for, die for
The type of love that starts and ends in your arms
Home away from home

Embrace

Francesca Judy Noelette '19

Reaching, rising, falling
I revel in the sting of welcoming
As a bristled jaw leaves my cheek
To be replaced by the soothing caress
Of gentle lips.

A flash of white like the sun, And my eye catches The brightest of smiles, A smile that matches mine.

A shift and the air throbs Pulsing like a beating drum, Yet as soft as a bird's wing, It is but a thrum.

There is a scent.
My mind is clouded with a scent,
Sage, sandalwood, and something else,
Something else that makes me warm.

Suddenly, I find
My cheek pressed against a heated chest,
And as the pounding heart against my ear aligns with mine,
We breathe as one.

Whispers, sighs, bated breath
The mingling of the salty tang of sweat
A slight brush of my sweet, silken lips,
And I taste it on my tongue.

Slipping, sliding, settling
Now, captured, no, protected
My yearning fades as passion burns
The bright, fiery hues of eternal love
Kindled by two kindred souls.

Here I find comfort Here I find peace Here I find hope Here I find love Here I find home All in your arms

Kuumbabe Reflections

Themes in African American History

Keturah Gadson '21

"Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be a problem? they say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or I fought at Mechanicsville; or, Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil? At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word" (W.E.B. DuBois, Souls of Black Folk)

Between me and the unalienated world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through forced politeness; by others through the difficulty of sounding politically correct. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be lost? They say, Why do you call yourself African American; or Where are you really from; or, Oh, so you're just black? At these I grimace, or am understanding, or reduce the identity-crisis to a teachable moment, as the occasion may require. To the real question, How does it feel to be lost? I answer seldom a word, because being African American never felt like being lost to me until I was made to feel that I was.

We are tired

Camryn Turner '21

Can you exercise something that is broken?

Rather something that refuses to be fixed?

I continue to fight

Fight with myself

Fight with my mind

My mind fights backs but neither of us win

Neither of us gain anything

We are tired

We've been trained to keep fighting

To never give up

To find strength where strength doesn't even seem to exist

Where it once existed

My mind has lifted weights

The weight of my dreams, my hopes, my goals

My fear, my sorrow, my resentment

The weight has broken my mental capacity

No matter how much I've trained myself, my mind

I can never prepare it for what happens next

What might happen next

What could never happen next

What should happen next

What I want to happen next

What I don't want to happen next

Chance Encounters

Arin Stowman '19











Moonlight

Anonymous

I feel beautiful in moonlight. Descending into hazy basements, amongst stares, the glow of my skin is security, it is sin.

I remember staring at freckled green eyes and curly hair and begging God for love. Presenting Marie from Catholic school with gifts, proposals of playdates, and instead feeling the hateful heat from freckled green eyes. When I close my eyes, I see those freckled green eyes, I recite the Lord's prayer and look up to freckled green eyes, break bread with freckled green eyes, I, my eyes, I wish I had those freckled green eyes.

I am another, of another, looking into mirrors peering at myself peering into my own brown eyes, if they were brown or black, *you my dear, you're brown*. 3am nights searching of "How to change your eye color." – *Diet? Contacts?* Prayer. Why doesn't God answer little black girl's prayers? Wishing for the bluest eyes, I too thought if I believed it enough, maybe the world would see my fair eyes?

Descending into basements looking into blue eyes, entranced by beauty noir. Hail Mary, full of Grace, may the Lord be with me, *let them stare*. And stare she did, alcohol hot on the breath, boldness to even touch, "*you're so fucking beautiful*." Shock on the first assault, vulnerability in naked blackness. But to the second, third, and tenth assault- ease and comfortability, recognition turning into an unprecedented glow. Unresolved anxiety buried under confident dismissal and acknowledgement. My black self: I am here.

I feel beautiful in moonlight, seeing drunken college students find pride in sinful black skin. I let them stare:

Black my beauty -- blackness my sin.

[&]quot;You're so fucking pretty" -- starry eyed pale hands clasping my freshly done braids.

[&]quot;You're so beautiful," large blue eyes following mounds of cheekbone and supple skin.

Window Musings

Alex-Maree Roberts '20

T

First, everything is black
By the time I've blinked I've forgotten
What lamplight looks like
I look at the place where my desk should be
Where my gilded tabelmats should be
Hanging from heating pipes in an earnest imitation of decoration
This is a moment of faith
That things are where I left them
Before the lamp went out

Then, I look at the window
Cool dim light from the streetlight
Diffuses in while my eyes adjust
And I don't need faith anymore
I see my hand
See the dark spot in the middle of my knuckles
See the mirror, catching the glow and throwing it back
See the colors of my comforter, bunched up at my neck

Finally, I turn to face the wall
Everything is black again
I see with my fingers
Fleece beneath me, over-loved teddy bear fur beside me
I close my eyes with faith
In the morning there will be light at the window
Sunlight too insistent to to be ignored
After I turn my back

II.

As cars go by I feel like a secret

Only the wisp of frozen air knows I'm here

In brushing a fallen curl from my window sill I feel outside's cold reaching in under my cracked window Refreshing for a moment and welcome Perhaps beckoning me back to the world of the living that I shunned Rows of plastic cups line my window sill Witnesses of meals reduced to takeaway servings of cereal Accusers against my claim to do right by the Earth by avoiding straws I washed them yesterday before I vacuumed my room I needed to make my footprint shallow as my breathing today There are places I need to be But I am practicing gentleness that says where I am is what I need Right now I am the top layer of my bed Save the gentle stirring at the window the warm air mimics my stillness From my place I cannot see my reflection Unless I stretch out my arm and look for my fingers waving at no one in particular A small mercy that I cannot see myself this way Sunk into the mold that I've been carving out for myself Contemplating cups and cold air and going to class My schedule's urgency mutes itself beneath my breathing

Creation Suite

Ryan Boyland '17

The New King James (Brown) Version of the Bible reads as follows:

In the beginning was my Blackness, and my Black was with God, and my Black was God, and God was Black.

I.

In the beginning God, created the heavens and the earth. Now, the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

...and God said, "Let there be light," and there was light...and He called the light "day," and the darkness, He called "beautiful."

And there it was, waiting, from the jump—my Blackness—Afro freshly picked and patted, wondering who the fuck forgot to pay the light bill—and that was the first day.

And God said, "Let there be a place to raise our hands so that we might clap on beats two and four."
And God called this place "sky."
And one day a woman named Aretha filled it with such a joyful noise, that God Himself wept.
And all of our thirsty skin drank in sunlight like it was supposed to.
And there was evening,
and there was morning—
and that was the second day.

And then God looked at the Earth, and saw it was dry and barren, so He made collard greens and yams and short ribs—and Jesus started doing the Electric Slide—and our bodies moved with a rhythm we did not yet understand—this was the First Cookout.

And when we saw the glory that he had made, we were all black and happy and full—and that was the fourth day.

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness," and Beyoncé emerged from the sea like the Black goddess of love she is, drops of ocean clinging to her kinks— the water so grateful to be near something so divine, that it turned into diamonds before it ever reached the ground. And these we didn't press into our gums, we used them for hopscotch and to skip rocks— and no one paid for them in blood— and that was the sixth day.

And on the seventh day, he rested.

You know, one of those good naps you take after Thanksgiving dinner when you ate too much of grandma's pot roast?

Creation Suite (cont'd)

II.

And on the eighth day he rose and stretched and yawned and named this place 'heaven' just for us and we called it home.

Here we don't become angels because we never stopped being holy.
And we don't fill our poems with the names of dead Black children because they're right around the corner.
And the name Trayvon is unremarkable. And Emmett is unburied. And we don't call them alive because here, we have never known death.

Here, every jump shot goes in— Every batch of mac and cheese is baked to perfection the sweet potato pie is always hot and crisp—

Fathers always make it back from the store, Mothers never weep, The streetlights never come on, and the kids can play outside until their bodies melt into the night sky.

Here, the people make the most beautiful constellations— Here we are beautiful. Here we are— Here we be Black.

And that, somehow, is enough.

Carvings From the Dust

Kaelyn Brown '21

Written by a 12 year old Kaelyn.

I admire the people who carve their lives out from the dust.

On a slate that's about to rust.

With a pencil that's about to break.

From years of writing.

With yesterday's hope destroyed and tomorrow's sorrow prolonged.

They inhale the dust in every meal trying to make the best,

Of a life that bends and twists and turns around,

never having time to set.

Dust holds families together.

And it tears them apart.

And on the dust, each person dies a little each day as their soul gets whisked to the skies.

The dust masks their identities, who they should've been.

and they all turn into one.

One person.

One life.

One fate.

It strangles them, almost kills them,

Pulling from their weakest state of mind.

Taking them to a place where no one knows.

But everyone goes.

And no one is left behind.

Voices Voices

God says...

Anonymous

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze." "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." "I will never leave or forsake you." "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." "For I know the plans that I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and future."

It may be a very overwhelming time but this season will not conquer you. Even when you may not see or feel it, I am working. I am fighting with and for you. I am your refuge and strength - a very present help in this time of trouble. I am touched by everything that is troubling you. I see every tear and care about every worry and fear. Nothing you're experiencing catches me by surprise. I am with you through it all, always moving on your behalf. My unfailing love is stronger than every weight. My plans for you are greater than you can even think or imagine for yourself. Give me the anxiety about what's the next step, where the money is coming from, how you will overcome. For I will sustain you. Your steps are ordered by the One who makes everything beautiful in its time. I am working everything together for a beautiful morning with glory that far outweighs the struggles of your night. I am your hope of glory. So as you press through the momentary sorrow, trust me. Let me free, comfort, and strengthen you. I love you.

Don't forget to pick up your stylish Kuumba casual attire!

Merchandise can be purchased at concerts.





T-Shirts (short and long-sleeve) available in red and black and in new designs!

For more information please contact Priscilla Samey at publicity@kuumbasingers.org







We also sell:

DVDs
Water Bottles
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Merchandise Photos by Dawn Anderson



Kuumba Singers of Harvard College SOCH Box # 66 59 Shepard Street Cambridge, MA 02138

The Kuumba Singers' ANNUAL FUND

To donate, please detach, fill out the form, and send it with your cash or check to: Kuumba Singers, SOCH Box #66, 59 Shepard Street, Cambridge, MA 02138.

Email

Questions? Contact Kaelyn Brown '21, Director of Development, at development@ kuumbasingers. org

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	Amount	Amount Class year

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