

National Youth Foundation *Presents:*

Grace Among Us

Linda Sherman Bates



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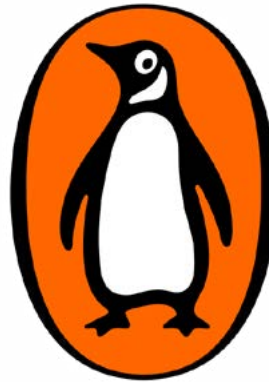


Service is the rent that you pay for room on this earth.
-Shirley Chisholm

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In a world often full of hate, cruelty, and greed, it is sometimes hard to see that goodness still exists. If we look closely, we can still find those who have goodwill, compassion, and benevolence. Open your heart and you will feel the grace that is in all of us.



Ms. Linda Sherman Bates was born June 12, 1947 in a small town called Eleanor in Mississippi. There were no hospitals nearby, so she was born in her family's home.



The roads in her hometown were made of gravel, and those gravel roads led her to be who she is today.



Her childhood was rough. She was often picked on. Her mother and father, Rosie Lee and Butler Sherman, separated when she was very young so she never really knew her father until later in life. Her mother, a kind and caring woman, could not afford to take care of her so she was sent to live with her aunt and uncle on their farm where they grew cotton and corn. Linda learned to sew her own clothes.



When she was in 2nd grade, her uncle was driving the bus to school when the bus hit a large rock and flipped over. It landed in some water. Linda and her uncle were able to get out, but her younger cousin, Marilyn, was trapped under the seat and drowned.



Linda and her uncle had many injuries. She spent a long time in the hospital. Her leg was wounded so severely that she was temporarily paralyzed. She slowly healed and was able to go back to school. She learned not to give up even in life's darkest moments.



On the farm, she would often lay in the grass and look up at the sky. Gazing at the clouds, she would imagine she was traveling to other places in the world. She would see the animals of Africa in those clouds. She would close her eyes and feel like she was floating away to another place. But those places were a long way from the gravel roads of Mississippi.



Linda loved school and always went to church and loved learning about Christianity. Her school in rural Mississippi was segregated. There were black schools and white schools. Linda worked hard and got good grades. She loved animals and joined the 4H Club. She graduated from high school in 1964.



Linda moved to Joliet, Illinois to live with an aunt. She went to college and studied English and Religious Studies. She met her husband, who was in the Air Force, and they moved to New Mexico. She was beginning to travel and see the places she had dreamed of.



They moved to Boston where her husband went to John Hopkins and then graduated from Harvard. Linda worked at John Hopkins and it was during this time that they met Milton Eisenhower at Harvard. Milton was President Dwight D. Eisenhower's brother. Linda and her husband had him over for dinner. Linda was honored to have such a distinguished guest in her home.



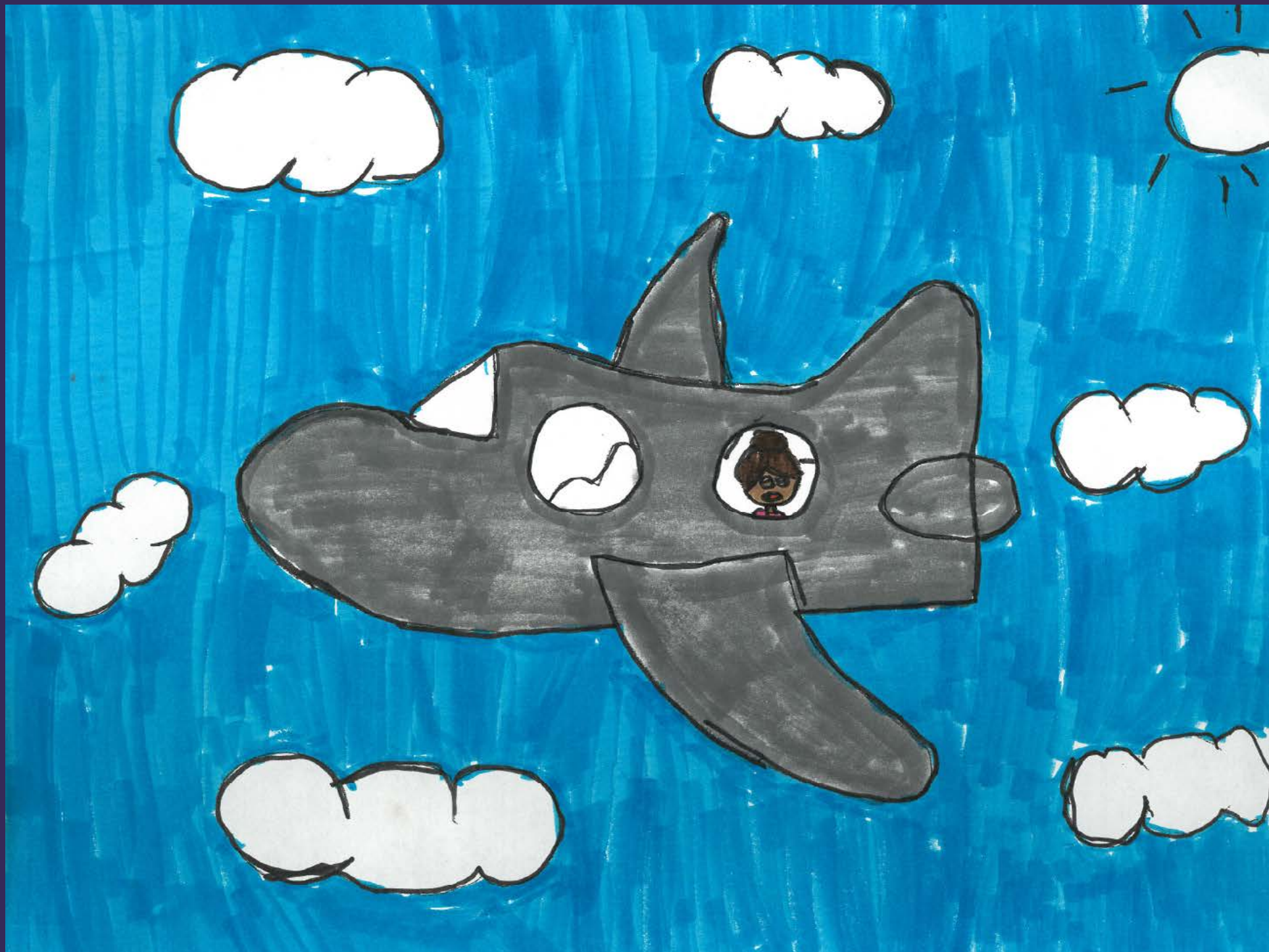
It was during this time in Boston that someone called her a derogatory and racially offensive word. She had never been called such a name before, as the people in her community in Mississippi were kind and respectful. She did not understand such hatefulness from a stranger on the street who did not even know her.



Linda and her husband came to Cincinnati, Ohio, where her husband became a minister and Linda became a Missionary Pastor to spread the word of God. She worked at Bethesda Hospital. Linda prayed everyday. She prayed for peace in the world. She prayed that politicians remember why they are doing what they do and that they are making decisions for all of us, not just for some. Linda devoted her life to selflessness and lending a hand to those in need.



Linda was able to travel even more, spreading her kindness and joy, and learning things she could share with others. She visited countries all over the world in Asia, Africa, Europe, South America and even Australia, the Caribbean and New Zealand. She was now seeing those places she had seen in the clouds as a little girl.



When she was in Jerusalem she got to see Jesus' tomb. But it was a trip to South Africa that brought back memories of the horrible bus accident when she was a young girl. While riding in a van, the van flipped over temporarily paralyzing Linda yet again and leaving her with horrible scars. She again faced an enormous trial in life but, believing we all have a destiny, Linda made a miraculous recovery.



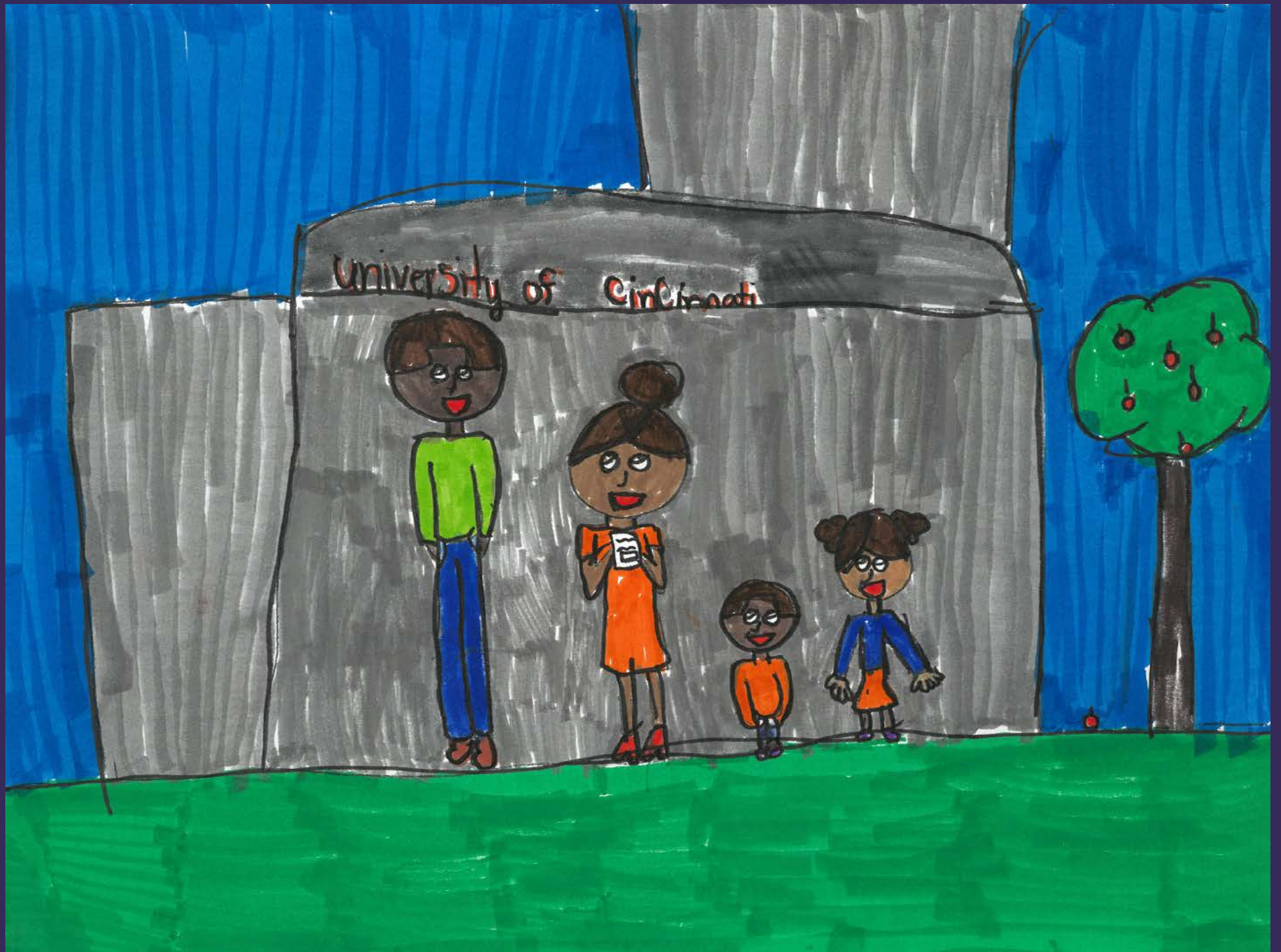
Linda was on a mission to help others. One day she was walking down the street and saw a sad, old, lonely war veteran sitting in front of a laundry mat. She stopped to speak with him and offer him a kind word. Linda and her husband befriended him and helped him clean up his apartment above the laundry mat. She even began taking this once-stranger to doctor appointments. Linda helped everyone she was able to and she saw the good in all people.



One day, Linda got a call that her father was not well. Although never really knowing him and always feeling rejected by him, she took him into her home where she cared for him until he passed away. He told her then that he was sorry he was not there for her as a child. She had never let the absence of her father affect her and stayed true to living a life of forgiveness and love in her heart.



Linda finished her degree in English and Religious Studies from the University of Cincinnati in 2003. Linda went on to work at a daycare and then at Cincinnati Public Schools to help children with behavioral difficulties. Linda taught them that they were all important and that they had a purpose in life.



Linda was approached by a movie producer who wanted to use her home in downtown Cincinnati for their movie about Shirley Chisholm. Linda and her husband graciously agreed to let them use their home as part of the set for their movie, honored to help pay tribute to someone who had also led a life of goodwill.



Linda, now retired from formally working, still devotes her life to helping others. She volunteers and works with her church. She continues to pray every morning and walk in the faith of the goodness of people.



Linda's positive, soft spoken, gentle, and kind ways leave a powerful impression on all who meet her. She is a humble person who, like you or me, might seem ordinary or even unnoticed, like a white dove on a blizzarding snowy day.



But if we open our eyes, we will see that the girl who once walked the gravel roads of Mississippi is what we need more of right now. If we open our ears, we might hear kind words. If we open our arms, we might lend a helping hand to others. If we open our mouths, we might speak words of peace. And if we only open our hearts we will be able to feel grace among us.

