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## A Letter of Gratitude

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# A Letter of Gratitude

**D**ear Ms. Akhmatova:

I have been blessed with a life in such contrast to your own that I can barely touch on the depth of your grief and the injustices done to you. As an American, I have seen the suffering of the Russian Revolution only through the eyes of historians and reporters and have wondered how people can stay in their country when their leaders impose on them a war that tears apart every shred of their being. I would like to think that, like you, I would remain at home to fight for my freedom. I cannot imagine making a daily ritual of standing in prison lines. I live in a world where it is unthinkable to even imagine waiting a few seconds to learn if your son or daughter is in prison, dead, or alive. You remained at home with your countrymen, suffering and grieving, when it would have been so much easier to escape; and because of this, you have allowed me to take an intimate look into your life and the lives of people born in a time and place where individual freedoms were few. Your eloquence and desire to record the atrocities occurring there have allowed me to gain a microscopic glimpse into the cold and lonely isolation, desolation, and desperation of those sentenced to wait and wonder about their friends and family who were lost to government imprisonment. What a heavy responsibility you must have felt knowing they depended on you to provide a journal of their experience.

I think of the troubles I endure in my everyday life and realize to my shame the sheer pettiness of each--the bickering, the time squandered. When compared to your losses and grief, these selfish annoyances mean nothing. I am lucky to live in a time when my individual imagination and emotions are valued. I have never had to fear being forbidden from working in my chosen field because it was not good for society as a whole.

I am free to speak out and to voice my opinion without looking over my shoulder or fearing that today might be the day they will find my diary and imprison or arrest me; or worse, my family will be punished for my expressions. You were born in a time and place where self expression was a crime that could cost you your life.

You have created for me a picture of brotherhood built on fear and strengthened through love, another world unimaginable in that your poetry is a crime against society. The strength you have shown is something I admire, and I hope I never have to test my own to such a severe degree. In a time when we are so individualized and look only at our own predicament, you spoke to me for yourself and your country and made me realize how lucky I am.

With deepest gratitude,

**Renee Wallace**