

Arts & Entertainment

Q&A: Amanda Gorman Talks UN Poem, Fame, Future Presidency

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — When Amanda Gorman was invited to read a newly developed poem at the U.N. General Assembly, the young sensation took a deep look at how several societal issues — such as hunger and poverty — have impacted Earth's preservation.

Just like her stirring inauguration poem last year, Gorman felt compelled to express the impact of unity through her poetic words on the opening day of the 77th session Monday in New York. The 24-year-old poet created "An Ode We Owe" in hopes of bring-

ing all nations together to tackle various issues of disparity along with preserving the planet.

Gorman once again graced center stage in front of world leaders. Her fame exploded after she recited her poem "The Hill We Climb" at President Joe Biden's inauguration, which made her the youngest inaugural poet in U.S. history. Her poem quickly topped bestsellers lists and made her one of the most in-demand poets, putting her on other big stages like the Super Bowl and in an interview with Oprah Winfrey.

In an exclusive interview with The Associated Press on Sunday, Gorman talked about

her hopes for the U.N. poem, her future presidency plans, resentment she's gotten toward her commercial success and wanting to someday write a novel.

Remarks have been edited for clarity and brevity.

AP: What do you want listeners to take away from your poem?

GORMAN: What I hope people can garner from the poem is that while issues of hunger and poverty and illiteracy can feel Goliath and are so huge, it's not necessarily that these issues are too large to be conquered. But they're too large to be stepped away from.



Amanda Gorman recites a poem during an event called "SDG Moment" at United Nations headquarters, Monday, Sept. 19, 2022. The event is meant to highlight the urgency and importance of the United Nations' sustainable development goals.

AP: How important is having a young voice like yourself to speak at the General Assembly?

GORMAN: When I was writing this poem, I kept getting flashbacks of several years ago when I came to New York for the first time. I was 16 and I was coming as the United Nations delegate for the Commission on the Status of Women. That was the first time I'd really ever engaged the U.N. as a space in any way. I just remember not seeing people who looked as young as me. I also looked like I was 11 at the time. I started marinating on this idea of "I want to come back someday in the future. I don't just want to be a delegate. I want to be a presenter." I'm not here to speak on

behalf of young people, but to speak alongside and with them.

AP: Why did you touch on Sustainable Development Goals in your poem?

GORMAN: I actually think that there's swaths of the population which has yet to be engaged or kind of told or activated around the Sustainable Development Goals. So much of what I like to do in the poem is making sure that we raise awareness around these issues and show that these goals do exist.

AP: How have you managed the transition to being a high-level celebrity?

GORMAN: I'm still learning and growing so much. I think one of the things that changed so much for me was just privacy. All of a sudden I became someone — which I never really necessarily expected — who gets recognized on the street. If I go to a restaurant, even if I'm wearing a mask, people are very good at spotting my face and or my voice. I'm very grateful for that type of visibility, even though sometimes I do miss individual privacy because it means that I have a platform that I can use for good.

AP: How have people approached you while in public?

GORMAN: I had an experience (Saturday) night. I was eating at a restaurant and a woman just came up to me and started crying and saying how much my poetry meant to her. It's flabbergasting to me. That's not a rare occurrence in my life anymore. My friends started crying around me seeing this woman's emotion. I had a great conversation with that woman before she

moved on, and me having to take a moment, sit with the fact that there were so many people around the world who probably have this person's same response that haven't gotten to me. I want to do justice by them when I write. I want to honor them when I write. That's a really hefty ask. But I also think it's a deep seated privilege of mine. I think that's the thing that I wrestle with and draw power from when I write.

AP: Has the fame changed your writing?

GORMAN: I think it hasn't changed my writing in the sense that my voice and style is still the same because the roots of where I come from are still there. But I do think it makes me think more creatively and imaginatively about ways in which I can get those poems in the world.

AP: Is it much harder to write these days?

GORMAN: I think the main difficulty in writing poetry for me nowadays is, yes, that there's a lot going on. But even if I'm able to carve out time and space to write, I think the biggest challenge that I can face sometimes is just my own self-sabotage in the sense that I feel so much pressure and so many eyes on me.

AP: How do you keep out the distractions?

GORMAN: I'm like a 70-year-old in an 11-year-old body. I have muscles from that of pulling away from technology and pretending like it's not there. Like it doesn't exist. When I write, I tend to put all my devices on "Do Not Disturb."

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