

Senior Poetry
Second Place
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America, Do You Hear Me?

You tell me that I'm lucky and that I'm blessed

America means opportunity and chances, you say

Clean roads, good schools, and cultural acceptance

in a melting pot.

Yet, America pulls at the corner of its eyelids, telling a 5-year-old that he has "Chinese eyes."

That 5-year-old palms at his eyes, willing them rounder, as he sits alone in his room.

That 5-year-old is me.

This is my story, I won't be silent.

"But no," you exclaim.

"This cannot be! Not in the land that *I* know."

"Fine," I say. "Let me continue."

You cannot see the 6-year-old

Frantically clutching his mother's hand as his footsteps echo beneath his tiny feet

Glancing back as America follows them and yells, "Go back to China!"

"I'm Korean," the little boy thinks.

This makes no difference to America.

That 6-year-old is me.

This is my story, I won't be silent.

Ah, "but that was the past," you retort. "Things are different now."

Well, tell that to the 13-year-old

Whose very being was portrayed to embody a global virus.

To hear the muted whispers and see the furtive glances as he walked by.

To watch as car windows rolled up and handkerchiefs covered mouths

At the very sight of him.

The virus affected not just America's lungs, but also its mind

Lighting new resentments and harboring hatred alike.

That 13-year-old is me.

This is my story, I won't be silent.

You grow more quiet as I tell my tale.

In one more effort, you say, "Education is all we need, we can change."

Yet, this is the saddest part of it all.

America says to her classroom, "Asians are no minority."

She teaches Science, a subject rooted in fact, but cannot understand absolute truths herself.

A 15-year-old student lowers his head onto his desk as his work is called into question.

“Do you not understand even 5th grade science?” America demands in front of the class.

Her disdain is palpable in every word.

That 15-year-old is me.

“America,” I say, “if I cannot even feel safe in the classroom, what is your answer?”

This is my story, I won't be silent.

But, my friends, there is hope.

If the voices of past generations have illuminated the world to atrocities and bigotry

So too can the humble pen of a student.