

## FIRST PLACE: The First Time I Put On A Hijab

By Mikel Jones

YouTube video available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19dRKexDU4c>

## SECOND PLACE: The Pledge

By Gabrielle Campbell

"I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

I see the pigs and my eyes squint

Threatened by the pride the color carries

I hear the sirens and my heart sprints

Live and die rate varies

Everyday is a battlefield for us.

We are stared at like walking transgressions

And just because lashings come mentally too, doesn't mean the blows lessen

Just like years back, each death is a taunting example waving in our presence

And we know this earth is far from heaven

When a chocolate silhouette can still be blamed for his own death

Better yet

When being made criminal to justify the way you left

Mike brown i wonder how you felt

Trayvon, what pain struck you apart

As you watched them try to dig your tomb deeper, ripping your parents apart

Oscar Grant, how did you feel in your last dying moments knowing you would never see your daughter's face again

Did they also try to make your murder ok and label it a life of sin?

Sean Bell, i went to your march when i was younger even when i wasnt able to comprehend your situation

But to know you got shot several times on your wedding day

is just an abomination

Sandra Bland, what a brave soul

It's heart crushing the way your story was told

Then had the nerve to pin your own death on you

How did you feel when they started saying you hanged yourself when we all knew it was far from true?

Dwayne Henry. I was there the day you died. And many won't even know your name

But I heard your last minutes of life and moment of death and I wonder who they blamed

It wasn't police but did they even care to catch the culprit?

I watched them joke and smile that morning as they dragged your tall, lifeless body away

And I'm so, so sorry that such a progressive human left earth in vain

And though I didn't know you, I still sobbed the same. You were probably just a walking statue for them but even statues have loved ones as well.

My brothers and my sister, how did you feel when they tried to switch up the truth and marinate it in their lies?

Fabricate loss of the lives

The nameless tales of ones we haven't even heard

Judges take liars's words

And your souls are left with no justice

Just stories that will never reach dark ears

But we know of you and it produces dark fears that we'll follow in your footsteps.

I can't pledge allegiance to a flag which doesn't care for the minorities in America and to the republic for whichever it stands is a split nation, ran from God, divided invisible, with liberty and justice for some.

**THIRD PLACE: Doctrine**

**By Nykemah Warren**

They used to check my bags

To see if I was back packin' destruction  
Thinkin' I couldn't outsmart them -  
I knew every angle to each situation  
Cause I wasn't gettin' out of this equation without  
Some blades hidden between my shirt fabrics

And I thought, "Bitch,  
How can you ever underestimate me? I  
Went to college at 15!" I  
Would've been had a degree if I wasn't locked  
Up in the mental penitentiary.

Dealing with doctors that felt  
More intelligent  
But still couldn't reason with how  
I could be in this place  
How  
The person I portrayed  
Didn't quite illustrate the scars  
Storied on my forearms

As if "Kemara" was an illusion  
Too beautiful to want to be eluded  
From their sights and from their memories;  
Take note, I am me  
*And* my depression.

But they couldn't quite handle that.  
*You* couldn't handle that.  
You see, smiles don't  
Quite translate to suicide,  
And your pride is too extreme to want to  
Reconfigure definitions

So let me paint a picture:

When I coax Kool-Aid out of the blackness of my skin,  
With a grin plastered on my face,  
Realize  
That this be the only joy evident within

That I don't sob from face  
Cause I let thighs do it for me.  
Because black girls don't cut  
Black girls can't cry  
Black girls don't die from  
Demons inside their minds, you see  
My history has said  
We're too strong for that.

Due to this disparity my  
Mental history yields discrepancies in the medical books

One time I'd seen happiness online  
For 27.95  
But didn't feel like it was worth  
Paying the shipping for

Adored how it looked behind  
A screen but didn't think  
It would bear same validity when  
In my possession,  
I am this metaphor

I've learned my lesson  
That some things are simply better as dreams

That material things  
Will never quite quell  
The craziness in mind, that  
Utilizing credit card time after time,  
You learn when  
To give up

Like taking the same drug for seventh  
Try or rebuying tight clothes from  
Different designer lines, there comes a  
Moment where you recognize  
That you're messed up, and  
Exterior outlets won't salvage you.

No bible verse will weigh  
On you because they  
No longer apply.  
Amazing Grace has gone  
Blind and you knew  
Medicaid was just gonna let her  
Slip by, you see that  
Hope

Is just a barrier until failure  
Can serve as replacement  
And 'cause you're black,  
You don't know if this is depression  
Or realism

Cynicism in the concept of realizing  
That pigment is not only  
Keeping you poor, but perplexed  
Not finding room to stand

I'm ready to fall then;

Like Autumn green leaves facing

Descent before turning

Golden, I am

A tree that has lost all her children

A conforming that must

Be okay with the alteration,

I find multiple points upon

I could question -

I'm tired

Of losing everything

In order

To

Gain

Something

New, I just don't understand

Why

The Universe can't see

I'm content

With all I managed to save already.

### **HONORABLE MENTION #1: Watching Injustice Triumph**

**By Sara Ahmed**

Anger

Injustice makes me angry

You see it's not even the situation

It's more about the justification

They say ignorance is bliss

But now I know that's not the case

Thought I could hide from the issues

Act like they didn't exist

He drives 2 hours to court  
The judge tells him to come another day  
Simply because he wants to take a break  
When he refuses and states this is my court day  
The judge claims that it goes his way  
No lee way  
Better come another day or else I have a warrant for your arrest  
Arrest. Don't even address the issue  
Don't even try to test it you have no power  
You'll make the situation even sourer  
When a lawyer gets payed for giving legal advice  
That consists of pay the ticket even though you're right  
It's just a business trying to make money  
Unspoken rule of don't speak back to nobody, even a teacher  
Who cares if you feel you're right?  
What does the world look like?  
Did you think it was fair?

Edmund Burke once said "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing"  
You see our society became a class tower  
Forcing people to become cowards  
Don't speak your weak  
Little do we know our voice is the only power?  
Every situation is unique but the emotions are mutual

Anger  
A great emotion after all when used in the right place  
An emotion that is a strong enough to ignite fire  
A fire powered by the tired  
A driving force that can make people stand up for their rights  
Unite a group faster than any other  
Anger makes situations unbearable  
That were once seen as tolerable  
It's hard to speak up  
But remember passion and numbers are stronger than any other danger

## **HONORABLE MENTION #2: The Revision of Our Ethics**

By Khadiza Bhuiyan

Shaking, trembling,  
I rush to the bus stop across the street.  
Beads of sweat trickling down my head,  
Words of prayer formulates in my mind,  
And a sigh of relief reached my lips as I reached it without harm.

Now comes the next challenge, but this time in the bus.  
I scan the seats and the aisles.  
A group of students laugh at a joke, an elderly man silently looks out the window,

And a middle-aged man stares right at me.

I quickly look away and try to make myself look busy by glaring into my phone.  
The all-too familiar sensation of nervousness and fright visits me once more.  
I know two eyes are constantly watching me,  
And my biggest fear can catch me by surprise again.

The image of a man yanking off a woman's hijab, the sight of a bearded man with a small cap on his head being beaten until he's unconscious begins to flood into my mind.  
The abuse and assault we face when we merely commute from one place to another involuntarily creeps into my thoughts.

The memory that I try to forget and shove away into the deepest depth of my mind,  
The assault and embarrassment I faced a year ago on the bus and train was what finally took me out of this trance.  
These thoughts would only make me less safe and more vulnerable.

Commuting home may be a nuisance for anyone who goes to work or school,  
But it is a challenge and a difficult task for me to accomplish.  
It's a blessing to come home without getting any attention from strangers,  
Or without being touched by men who thinks it's funny to see a young Muslim panic.

It's unthinkable to witness or to be a victim of such a crime in the most diverse city in the world,  
But as news spread, so do the crimes against us.

The bus abruptly comes to a stop as I make my way to the front door.  
My past experience whispered to me not to linger in the back of the bus,  
Not to isolate yourself from help and assistance.  
I warily step off the bus and speed walk my way into the train station.  
My trembling and nervousness continues as I swipe my MetroCard on the turnstile.  
As I saw two police officers, I started to be more at ease.  
I couldn't recall any officers being in the train station when I was targeted a few months ago.

The man was talking to me about how he followed a Muslim girl home,  
And he seemed to give me a little warning from his story.  
My ignorance towards him seemed to make him drift away,  
And it was then I realized how everyone's ignorance of this situation made me even more alarmed.

There is always someone who comes to rescue a victim of an assault or a crime,



Or so I've heard in the news,  
Since I have never witness it happen to me when I was being targeted for my identity.

Justice blooms in every corner of the street,  
It's always there, ready to defend you.  
But as the world grows more corrupt and humans are being deprived of their natural rights,  
Justice is constantly being challenged.

Moral values start to be questioned, ethics begin to be rewritten,  
And we the people have to suffer the consequence,  
Because a crime against one is a crime against all.