

what they didn't prepare me for:

how do i tell a student
violence is not the answer
when he draws
stick figures with guns
girlfriend shouting
bae, nooo
corner of 7 mile
a gas station
this is what Detroit
means to him

why?
i ask

this is what i see

Guns
 Death
 Drugs
 Sex

distressful images
roll through
hour after hour
messages of hope
s p r i n k l e d i n

that day was harrowing.
their everyday.

how do i tell him
violence is not
the answer
when police stop n frisk
him for being young n black

how do i tell him
violence is not
the answer
when his mama
beats him with the belt
because the world hates her

how do i tell him
violence is not
the answer
when the symbol of
the reverend and doctor

non-violence
a s s a s s i n a t e d.

how do i tell him
violence is not
the answer
when he sees his face
in millions of men
behind bars

how do i tell him
violence is not
the answer
when he sees his face
on the nightly news

how do i tell him
violence is not
the answer
when he sees his flesh cut out
by slavemasters' w h i p s

how do i tell him
violence is not
the answer
when he sees himself hung
like
s t r a n g e
f r u i t

how can i tell him
violence is not
the answer?

child soldiers:

Miss, my daddy got shot and killed this weekend.

Miss, my brother died last week.

Miss, i lost my grandma yesterday.

Miss, my step-mom passed a few weeks ago.

Miss, i just lost my god-brother.

Miss, my daddy died this morning.

Miss, today is the anniversary of my mother's death.

Miss, my head hasn't been right since my brother died.

Miss

Miss

Miss

Why are you in school right now?

Child, it is okay to go home.

Miss, it's okay.

You are the definition of resilience,
my child soldier.

the american dream:

getting mosques
post BOMBED
while 9/11
1 in 3
black men
will be incarcerated
in their lifetime

see me in a hijab
see him in a hoodie
see brown skin
see black sin
so they fill us in
cells and coffins

war on drugs
war on terror
same difference
just want us locked up
based on a racist
system of
error

replacing schools
with prisons
books with chains
from Guantanamo
to abu ghraib
more people
under surveillance
than those enslaved
the new jim crow

2017

nabra hassenen

17 years old

raped and

beaten to DEATH with a bat

2012

trayvon martin

17 years old

shot and KILLED like a rabid dog

see me in a hijab
see him in a hoodie
see brown skin
see black sin
so they f i l l u s i n
 cells and coffins

dear god
 i thought hell
 came after death
 so please tell
 me why this life
 feels like a
 living hell

call this headscarf
an invisibility cloak
because all they ever
seem to do is
look right t h r o u g h m e

TOWEL HEAD!
FOREIGNER!
TERRORIST!

stop me at airport security
ma'am you need to *step aside*
suspecting me as the terrorist
when more white men
have terrorized
 this land
than history can count

Columbus called his
 ethnic cleansing campaign
 "finding the new land"
Trump calls his
 ethnic cleansing campaign
 "making America great again"

colonial dreams
birth
deadly nightmares

husbands watch slaveowners fulfill their
necrophilic
fantasies

capitalist horrors s e e p o u r j a i l c e l l s

80 iraqis BLASTED!
Afghani school EXPLODED!

Kylie Jenner
hiding her stomach
gets all the press
this social blindness
we call news
is leaving our

education in a mess
education in a mess
education in a mess

to my sisters assaulted on the daily
to my brothers under surveillance

let us hold onto our dreams
the only way to survive and heal

i had a dream

we raised little Angela's and Huey's
raising the next generation of revolutionaries

i had a dream

that we overpowered
let our hands join together
like the fist of power
we do this for our people

don't you dare stop and cower!!!

i had a dream

visions of unprecedented unions that lead
Arabs, Blacks, Latinos as one team
e r a d i c a t i n g the system
oh what a beautiful scheme
the most colorful dream of dreams

recognize her resiliency:

she inhales
she exhales

stories of struggle, sexism, survival
in sync they breathe
across 7 seas
now let me narrate
the lives of these ladies

little Noor learns
to throw stones at tanks
before she learns
to count to ten

by 5
her father warns her
not to flinch
at the sight
of IDF soldiers

by 10
she learns
the definition of apartheid
by stopping at checkpoints everyday
where she has witnessed birth given by
new mothers and
dead mothers

by 15
her cousin teaches her
to stare soldiers in the face at protests
and that milk is the remedy of pepper spray
she learns
how to run
when soldiers start chasing her
for fear of being indefinitely detained
or worse
shot by rubber bullets
that are
not
always
rubber

by 20
she realizes
that Israel has convinced the world
that she is indeed the terrorist
for being Arab?
or for resisting an apartheid state?
you tell me

now why they callin
a colonial occupation a conflict?
like the streets of Detroit in 1967
why they callin a rebellion a race riot?

from the Gaza strip to Detroit
more brown and black hands behind bars
capitalism's black plague
shadows the north star

she inhales
she exhales

stories of struggle, sexism, survival
in sync they breathe
across 7 seas
now let me tell you
the story of Khadijah in the D

little Khadijah learns
to duck inside her own home
before she learns
to spell gunshots

by 5
her father warns her
not to flinch
at the sight
of police

by 10
she learns
the definition of racism
when her teacher does not believe
she's read all seven Harry Potters

by 15
her cousin teaches her
that she is seen as a
hoe
before she is seen as a
woman
she learns how to
1, 2 punch
so the next time her uncle
puts his hands on her
she can be
the survivor and
not the victim

by 20
she realizes
that America feeds her left overs
if there's even anything left over
for being Black?
for being a woman?
or for wearing a hijab?
you tell me

stories of struggle, sexism, survival
in sync they breathe
across 7 seas
now recognize her resiliency
and still she breathes

she inhales
she exhales

a teacher's last supper:

i carry a
thousand stories on
these shoulders
as heavy as
the bags underneath
these eyes
dark circles
shadowed by
their deep trauma
every bone given
to the cause
did i give any to me?
sacrifice for the youth
the last supper
with our melanated
Queens and Kings

a teacher's refuge:

you were my home i came to
when i escaped the war of teaching in the hood
when there was nowhere else to run to
Kings comes with bullet holes to the bones
when the sun came down

every night
every night
every night
every night
every night
every night

i found refuge in your laughter
i found safety in you
raising melanated Queens and
you healed my wounds
you were my sun and savior