

The Aftermath:

Can you hear me?

It seems to me my voice is only heard when I stand upon a stage, words streaming from my lips like a storm scintillating your senses.

When I am up here, I'm untouchable. Unbeatable. Unbreakable.

Racism, colorism, sexism. Prejudicial people. Hypocrisy and hate.

Snap louder than your neighbor so they know you're not one of those people.

Aggressively applaud your agreement...

"Thank you for your thoughtfulness."

"This is what is needed now."

"It's time to shut this down."

"Let's move on and up."

So much support.

Everyone eager with encouragement.

Call the chase and crowds will come.

And yet...

After the ovation walks out those doors.

After the lights fade into coldness.

After reality reels us back.

This is the aftermath.

This is the sound of scripts saying, "you need to go back to your roots."

This is the sound of a director asking me if I can make up Chinese.

This is the sound of casting any minority as every minority because their stories are all the same, right?

Mixed Race, Ethnically Ambiguous, Open Ethnicity.

It doesn't matter if it doesn't affect me.

And you wonder why we skip your calls.

"Thank you for your thoughtfulness."

"This is what is needed now."

"It's time to shut this down."

"Let's move on and up."

"Thank you..."

"What is needed now."

"Shut this down."

"On and up."

"Thank you."

"Needed now."

"Shut down."

"On, up."

"Thank you."

“Now.”

“Shut.

“Up.”

This is the sound of convenience over convictions.

This is the sound of money over morals.

This is the sound pacification over principles.

This is the sound that echoes in my ears for a year.

I am not a spokeswoman, searing injustice in succinct poems.

I am not a Joan of Arc, fearlessly fighting for fraternity.

I am not policing politics pressuring for a positive poll.

I am not continually courageous, gracious, audacious.

I am not always optimistic or idealistic.

I am not untouchable. Unbeatable. Unbreakable.

I am tired.

I am so tired.

I am tired of empty promises.

I am tired of vows unkept.

I am tired of the hollow thunder of words unaccompanied by action.

I am tired of the aftermath.

And yet...

There is the sound of a student speaking up in spite of stifling presences.

There is the sound of a professor pushing himself publicly to perceive his own prejudices.

There is the sound of conversation in courtyards over cups of coffee.

A gentle whisper in the wind.

A kindness done unseen.

The boldness to back your beliefs when nobody follows.

And this is the sound of triumph.

This year, I have nothing for you.

No witty wordplay or clever conundrums.

No snappy song with a flourishing finish.

No passionate plea for progress.

No heartfelt hopes for humanity.

Instead, I offer you space.

An empty canvas. A blank screen. A lone microphone. A bare stage.

I leave you silence.

Fill it.