

She laced her words with a venomous string of profanity. “Go back to your damn country—”she roared with an attempted murderous look. Her scraggly hair hung damply as it swallowed a thin middle aged face. Thick black glasses framed her bagged distraught eyes. Her skin was creased with age, but no wisdom lingered in the folds.

—*but this is my country*—my young 13 year old voice wanted to shout back. “My country” is the crowded cemented streets of New York City, its America.

Hatred always came in two parts, along with the two parts of my hijab. I’ve received every purple sullen glare America has thrown around, for the small bandana that holds my gathered hair. And every verbal abuse for the longer piece that falls over my neck and about my shoulders.

“—go back to Iraq—” She side-stepped the worn leather suitcase that perched at her foot to a threatening step towards my mother and I as we passed her in the street.

—*Why? I’m not Iraqi. My parents are Egyptian*— Education is what they immigrated for; to offer their children an opportunity to turn out successful. They came here, seeking aspects that weren’t available in Egypt.

But what that woman failed to see was: under the hijab I have been wearing proudly since the age of six and the veil my mother wears equally as proud, if not more, is in fact flesh and bones wrapped in a layer of skin—we’re humans simply wearing mere fabric assembled to fit human figures.

We each have our vision of success that we hang in the night sky to watch it twinkle and blink until it’s accomplished. My vision is far from being suffocated into nothingness by the letters formed to be nooses, because one day I’ll collect every poisonous noose permitted to chaining society and thread them together into acceptance. One day they won’t be used to choking away differences, but link them together to form a ring of peace. One day.