

**Deven Patel**

Age: 17, Grade: 12

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Category: Poetry

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**Brown Rice**

**False Hope:**

They call to me  
The thirst for inclusion draws me in  
Pushing past all common sense.  
I walked confidently,  
Proudly.  
After four years of invisibility  
I stood visible to all

I should've known better.  
They reeled me in  
to toss me back into the wild  
“What did you get for question 7?”  
A classic for an Asian like myself  
Maybe some small talk would've softened the blow,  
But no,  
I wasn't worth the time.

“I couldn't figure that one out”, I responded.  
The bullets of returning solitude set in as I walked to my seat

“I thought they were supposed to be good at math”

They question not my intelligence,  
but whether there's brown on my skin  
Whether I match the stereotype they built

Perhaps it was just a joke  
Does it matter?  
My Blood burned red

But then,  
I returned to my natural state:  
Disappointment  
Disappointed in her for failing her community  
Disappointed in Alabama for proving the reputation I so argued against  
Disappointed in a system that refuses to change

**I am not....**

I am not the white object  
Powerful, fearless, strong

I do not hide my insecurities  
For they strengthen me  
I do not live with their privilege  
For that is not me

I am not the dark object  
Oppressed and enraged  
I do not fight a world that belittles me  
For that is not me

I am not the white object that ignores the dark object  
Nor am I the dark object that pushes against the white object  
I am lost....  
In a world of black and white,  
I am brown  
I am expected to sit and watch as the world burns  
For it is "not my problem"  
But that is not me