

## Poems by Noor Smadi

**ABSTRACT.** To have grown up with limited to relatively zero representation in pop culture was a challenge. I felt invalid and invisible in my struggle. I had voices in my head telling me that I'm the other of the other of the other but no one to relate my experience to. However, I still found power, solidarity, and strength in all things intersectional. The joys and tears that we share because we all are familiar with the pain is what pushed me to write and share my story. I found my savior to be Audre Lorde who stood strong and proud in her skin. I found my savior to be my own grandmother who taught me what I know about my Arabness, my womanhood, and my resilience. My goal in writing these two works is to show the world that Arab Brown women are multifaceted, complex, and a plethora of rich and colorful identities that we picked up along our journey. I reflect the paradox of complex identities and how often they are surprisingly mutually exclusive to describe the wholeness of being. I capture moments of wholeness as they truly reflect what it means to simply "be" or exist in a society that constantly needs you to justify, explain, and defend yourself. I write in order to create a safe space of acceptance, abundance, and simply existing.

### **The time the falaha<sup>[1]</sup> made me cry**

I stood there, for 30 minutes

Listening to everything you had to say,

every story  
every joke  
every fight

I saw me. That's a first.

You know not to live in shame, because of Audre Lorde  
You know to fight for the motherland, because of setek<sup>[2]</sup>  
And you stand tall, because of both

Their white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy  
Your jet black hair, keffiyeh, and code switching

Their "where are *really* from?"  
Your "We're gon impeach this mofo"

Their "Do you hate America?"  
Your "I'm doin this for my people"

Their "go back home"  
Your 13th district, 13 siblings, and worried mother  
All waiting for you, home.

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<sup>[1]</sup>Translated: farmer. Refers to Rashida Tlaib claiming her roots and family as farmers.

<sup>[2]</sup>Translated: Grandmother. Refers to the influence that Tlaib's grandmother had on her

\*This was written after being honored with meeting Rashida Tlaib in person at a dinner in Atlanta for American Muslims for Palestine.

## Resistance/Survival

I'm boiling sage to drink,  
I'm realizing that America,  
comes from my people.  
But this poem isn't gonna unfold  
to make you believe  
that my brown skin and dark hair  
is finally "American" enough

To make you believe  
that my hips have uncurved, or  
My skin has bleached, or  
My tongue has forgotten its mother  
As I can tell you, that  
I've tried...

But I will not run away  
from where I come from  
And I will not tell you stories about  
Little Syria as the origin of the World Trade  
Center in Manhattan  
To convince you  
Or anybody else, that  
I deserve to exist in the same place where I  
was conceived

Instead,  
I will speak my mother tongue at WalMart  
I will wear my keffiyeh around the same  
streets  
Where my mother would be called a raghead

And I will remind myself to exist loudly  
Not exist  
but survive, prosper, and roar.

There is no doubt  
that since its inception,  
This country hates me.

I have known this way too early  
For me to pinpoint a day or an event.  
But maybe, it started at home.

Maybe, it started with my grandmother  
telling me I was too dark

And trust me, I know my light skin ass should  
shut up and accept the free drinks at the bar  
from lonely men with internalized racism. But  
It's all up to context, because  
with my blue-eyed granddaddy, and  
My green-eyed  
Loving  
Sweet  
Tender mother  
I am the sandy.

She would buy me bleaching creams, and  
Tell me to stay out of the sun

The truth is, I am a brown  
Muslim  
Queer  
Woman  
In America, and my resistance is the only way  
for survival

I don't know a lot, and  
I don't got a lot, but  
I know what I got  
I got my pride, and  
I got my fight, and  
Imma use it till these colors  
Run  
Out

I'll remind myself that  
I deserve  
To let the light in  
To let the love in

**Noor Smadi** is a visual storyteller based in Atlanta, GA. Her artistry ranges from realist photography to abstract acrylic paintings. Inspired by both the physical and metaphysical, Noor tells the stories she witnesses hoping to give voice and representation. She employs her intuition and vision to explore questions of identity, decolonization, resistance, intersectionality, and healing. She uses art as a medium of self-determination, self-expression, and self-care. Art has been created to give a voice to those marginalized and oppressed. It makes her feel capable of change, whole, and hopeful. She is especially skilled in mixed media on canvas, incorporating unconventional media like wax, coffee, wine, and every day surrounding objects.