

#USvsHate

### **American Dirt**

My mother wraps our American dream into nice folds and proceeds to kiss the top like it's a baby she's nurtured, on the kitchen counter. My sister plays funny English words again in her mouth, she says words kids told her at school like "eat dirt" but they never make sense. They lean together, giggling like old friends. We will never get the inside joke. My tongue is split into two, my heart shattered every day. I carefully glue it together every night only for it to be chewed up the next morning by some folk and then spit back onto the ground and laughed at. The pieces land on American dirt, like a lot of our things do and how we sometimes do. In this sweet land of liberty, in this soup of America we are the salt. Needed to survive, ignored, dirt, stepped on. I clench my fists and think of the girls in my class, dishing the dirt on me. They say I will be nothing when I grow up. That I will be buried underground and my dark skin will be unrecognizable and blend in with the dirt around me. Nobody will remember me.

The moon waxes and wanes, letting waves wash over its cosmic ground.

My mother waters the dirt every night and every morning. She watches our bodies bloat and redden. She picks out the weeds and keeps us in a bowl by the windowsill, overflowing from one side. Sometimes our skin puckers under the sunlight, then she will close the window and draw shade. She watches us bloom from the dirt, slowly and carefully.

### **A Harsh Mark**

My bindi beats a strange rhythm  
and leaves a sticky residue on my skin  
as I peel it off.

Butter churns in my belly  
and an untenable thirst sits  
in my throat, *I will never be like them,*  
my bangles leave a mark on my uprooted  
wrist.

I watch my mother adds cumin and  
a bit too much turmeric into  
the dal. the turmeric will stain my  
nails a yellow tint.

My grandmother circles incense  
bottles over and around my  
distinctly almond face, cleaning  
the bad luck from my destiny.

At school I am surrounded by daughters with  
freckled lips and daisies coming  
from their eyes. all delicately crafted  
with porcelain and decorated with gouache.

I feel particularly *indian*.  
there is glue lingering on my forehead  
bangle designs imprinted on my wrists  
turmeric peeking from under my nails  
and my clothing reeks of incense

*When will I fit in?*