

**Senior Poetry
Honorable Mention
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America's Factory

Another day-
at the factory.

Machines piled high.
Smoke smothering the light-
and our dreams.

The wheels turning; the gears interlocking.
A perfect fit.
But no space in the system for me.

Another day-
at the factory.

The wood cut; bricks laid; posts lined up:
A house, with a picket fence.
I watch two pretty children playing.
But I can't go further-
For they knew to lock me out of the yard.

Another day-
at the factory.

Polishing and painting; dusting and wrapping;

I look inside the mirror, seeing beauty.

A unique blend of colors and textures.

But *they* only see one.

So black I blend in with the night-

Like the night they snapped my father's neck.

Left him hanging there like one of those ornaments- on their December tree.

Snow falling around their pale, ghostly bodies

As they sang of a Silent Night.

Another day-

at the factory.

Clothes, made from the cotton *I* picked

Meals, cooked from the crops *I* grew

Lives, saved from the parts of me *I* gave-

I gave everything.

For *our* country.

Yet no one hears me.

The protectors shoot my people in the streets; commended.

I march those same streets in protest; condemned.

They lock my people in cages;

that's where they belong.

I speak up;

I don't belong-

here

I belong in the silence-

The *black* nothingness I came from.

My life doesn't Matter.

But I can't give up.

I can't stop breathing.

The scars of injustice still glow red on my back.

My ancestors' words take flight from my tongue.

I cry, and I cry, and I cry.

Until-

I can hear freedom ringing,

Like a bell.

Calling me...

Another day-

at the factory.

This time,

they made sure the machines were loud enough.

Loud enough to drown out my voice.