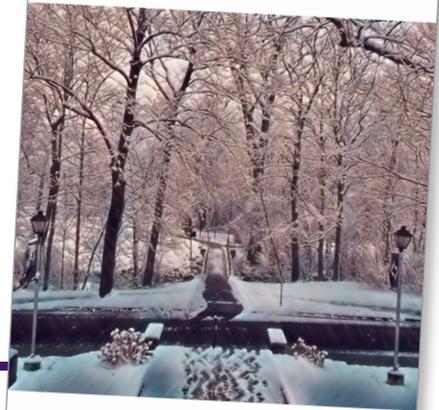


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THE BEST YOUNG WRITERS AGE 14-24

FALL 2017

TWINKIE

John Choe

What happens to a dream deferred?

Maybe it doesn't dry up,
Like a raisin after all.

But ferments,
Like a pot of kimchi.
Maybe it sizzles,
Like a hot pan of bulgogi.

*Does a dream deferred explode,
like a Samsung phone*

Or last forever like a Twinkie?
Yellow on the surface and white
inside, right?
A ching-chong chink painted with
artificial colors,
sponge cake injected with
xenophobia
that never expires.

Didn't you call me a Twinkie,
while you planted a fun house
mirror in front of me,
casting white guys in yellow face,
buck teeth, taped eyelids,
a sibilant Asian accent—
Is this what you see in me?
Maybe we can pull the white out of
whitewash,
And pour in yellow to add more
color.
I want to be the hero
In the next Indiana Jones,
hear my voice narrate like Ray
Liotta in *Goodfellas*.

Maybe we have enough Buddhas
and Gandhis,
And not enough Genghis Khans.
Do we need more leaders
who sip blood for breakfast?
Will the textbooks teach you who I
really am, then?

Does a dream deferred cut like a
surgeon following
dotted black lines on a teenager's
face?
Creating a perfect double eyelid,
or an Angelina Jolie nose?

Since apparently I'm so good at
math, let me explain an equation I
learned growing up:
Stereotypes + self doubt =
prejudice,
the square root of which is
irrational fear.
Now, multiply that by systemic
discrimination
and you get y over x to the power
of racism.
But this equation is unbalanced.
Some of these variables don't cross-
cancel out.
America, we have a problem.
and it's bigger than a multi-
polynomial,
more complex than E equals MC
squared.
America, we have a problem,
and you can't find the answers in
the back of the textbook.

My mother always told me " John,
you have to fight your own fight
before anyone will care to help you."
So let me pull out my Samurai
sword,
I am not your Chink,
I am not your Jackie Chan,
I am not your math homework
answer key,

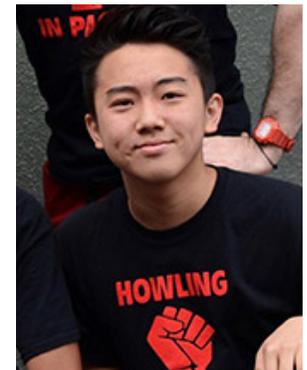
And I am not a Twinkie.

I am a dreamer who sleeps on many
great ideas,
I am a Korean
I am East,
And I am West,
I choose to not trade my heritage
for scan, copy, command + P, clone
models on billboards.

You have force-fed me pills to keep
me asleep
From my dreams through this land,
But my alarm just went off.

it is morning, and I can smell the
homemade sweet sikhye from my
bed,

I am ready to wake up.



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