

Chains Disguised as Success and Security
By Vuestro (He/She/They) and Zee (They/Them)

I feel a sickness in my stomach when I realize
When I realize that society has already set their intentions for black and brown children
It makes me sick, stomach turning, lightheaded
Because I know that white children would never be assumed and abused like that.

Public School, A place which for the next 12 years of my life I would be spending a chunk out of my day learning and discovering who I was as a person. However I, Vuestro Merced, was never one of the most fortunate to attend a school that granted me academic success and security. For most of my life as a Latinx black & indigenous person of color, I lived in neighborhoods where people were not granted privilege; thus I went to schools where their children were not granted the privileges that white children had. As a small child I remembered being excited and eager about my academic success, but as I grew older, that enthusiasm vanished. Each passing day, each passing week was just pure agony. Every day I woke up expecting to face the criminalization I would get from the majority white staff at a predominantly black school; my other black peers were not exempt from such treatment. Every day I would expect the continued set up of failure my white teachers would set upon me. They only made me feel like a thug, a criminal, and freak because of who I was. Queer. Latinx. Immigrant. Black. Indigenous. Labels that all were constructed under this colonialist, systematically racist virus we call white supremacy.

There is no reason for 5 to 10 police officers to be in a school of children,
There is no reason our children, our siblings, our friends
To be put in a chokehold,
To be put in handcuffs,
To be punched, and kicked
in a place of learning, in a place where you send them and you think they're going to be safe.
These officers are hurting our friends and family.
These officers never gave a damn to begin with.

How the fuck are we going to ensure the success of our youth if we continue to have adults that unfairly paint them as future villains of the world? Our black babies, our trans babies, our youth are our future. We need role models just like them who can guide them to forge a path to their success and safety. Now as an adult going from 21 to 22 this is the vision and the fight that I intend to combat. And do I say fight? Yes, I say! And for the generation after us I will fight like HELL for our babies! Schools are places that students should feel safe in and confident about their success! Not juvenile detention centers where they feel like they're in chains and shackles!

Why do we allow bullies to "protect" and "teach" our children? What are you going to do to get these bullies out of our schools and away from our communities?