

## The Audacity to Stand

*~ Dedicated to the December 2019  
20<sup>th</sup> Oxford University Women's Symposium*

You may call me a pretty filly  
to make me feel small,  
but I am the destroyer of worlds.  
Shiva stands tall.  
I stand here.

You may make fun of my fierce pack of women  
for claiming the power of wolves,  
but I'll keep empowering gender champions.  
We have problems to solve.  
I stand here.

You may call them out as an other  
to take freedoms away and enslave,  
but I'll call them my sisters and brothers.  
I have power and freedom to give.  
I stand here.

You may make learning language seem  
too difficult and out of their reach,  
but I'll make learning English Literature  
joyful and accessible to teach.  
I stand here.

You may make the rules to the game  
a hypocrite's trick to divide us,  
but I'll make sure Madonnas and Monsters  
can't break or hide us.  
I stand here.

You may pass my worth over into the  
"opportunity hires" pile,  
but I will empower my femininity,  
continue gaining status, and smile.  
I stand here.

You may give me poor working conditions  
and leave me to walk home in the dark at night,  
but for each one of us that dies out there  
another stands up to fight.  
I stand here.

You may try silencing our champion  
for obscenity's sake,  
but I'll keep his stories of you're shame  
alive, conscious, and awake.  
I stand here.

You may create a moral panic  
and try to constrain whom I love,  
but I'll never learn to change it.  
I'll learn to rise above.  
I stand here.

You may take away my religious symbols  
and bully my curly hair,  
but I'll just pick my natural curls  
out longer and never give a care.  
I stand here.

You may believe they are worthless  
and won't amount to much,  
but I'll fly the world over,  
inspiring girls to stand up.  
I stand here.

You may say I can't be called to the pulpit  
to speak with God's grace,  
but I'll share the holy spirit's leading  
in this and every space.  
I stand here.

You may have left my family's history  
full of neglect and abuse,  
but I'll teach families and even CEOs  
that instead nurturing can be used.  
I stand here.

You may attack an immigrant's childhood  
and underfund translation,  
but I'll teach mothers the target language  
in every host nation.  
I stand here.

You may leave homeless people hungry,  
exposed out on the street,  
but I'll build grassroots kindness kits  
and make sure that they can eat.  
I stand here.

You may spread your misconceptions,  
without experiments you'll fall,  
but I'll teach science to the underrepresented,  
urban, poor girls, and all.  
I stand here.

You may construct a binary world education  
and try to hide your gendered truth,  
but I'll teach the new generation of teachers  
to be service leaders, too.  
I stand here.

You may hijack their cultural image,  
contorting it to your single-minded eyes,  
but I'll hold them up to show their own hijab story.  
They'll make you laugh till you cry.  
I stand here.

You may call our culture immoral,  
kick our brothers and us out,  
but I'll construct my own gender analysis  
of what Dhaqan Celis is about.  
I stand here.

You may rape me at age 11  
and have my uterus destroyed,  
but I'll Inspire International human  
rights leaders to never be ignored.  
I stand here.

You may arrest me while I'm sleeping  
in our sacred holy space,  
but I'll rise a Sudanese Lady Liberty,  
Kandakas thoub reclaimed.  
I stand here.

You may confuse my religion and my culture  
to take my rights and pleasure away,  
but I'll translate my Holy Quran instead of you vultures,  
and I'll tell you what it says.  
I stand here.

You may medicalize my virginity,  
twist my body to fit your ballad's needs,  
but I'll shine a light on your objectification,  
commodification, and greed.  
I stand here.

You may attempt to possess our beauty  
to trade in your economic exchange for a fee,  
but I'll break the chains you put on me.  
I set my colonized aesthetic free.  
I stand here.

You may under serve my family planning,  
not meeting my contraceptive rights,  
but I'll make sure every child is a wanted child  
when the timing is just right.  
I stand here.

You may shame and disrespect my biological equality,  
seeing different as less than,  
but I'll work to find mensuration liberation  
and bleed my way wherever I am.  
I stand here.

You may suppress my social capital and maintain a glass  
obstacle course for STEM minorities to navigate,  
but I'll champion their community cultural wealth  
and help them graduate.  
I stand here.

You may forget what we have spoken;  
you may forget what we have done,  
but we'll line up without submission  
until this war on women has been won.  
Yes, we stand here.

Esta Broderick-Winkle