



Do I Stand?

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VOICE

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ABSTRACT

This submission, “Do I Stand?”, illustrates the internal battle I have at times with being a Black Woman with a military background. “Do I Stand?” is also my answer to this question on whether kneeling during the national anthem is disrespectful to veterans.

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Do I stand for a country that looks at me and my people as
3/5 of that as a white man?

Do I stand for a country that still cannot admit that it was
built by my ancestor's hands?

Do I stand for a country that when they see my skin see the
stereotypes?

Do I stand for a county that won't lose sleep by killing me
or someone that looks like me at night?

Do I stand for a country that replaced history so that a
body of people will feel superior over the next?

Do I stand for a country that has lied throughout history
and proof can be read in text?

Do I stand for a country that looks at my race and calls us
hoodlums and thugs?

Stand for a country that has proven time after time it's only
the white man they love?

Should I stand for the country that speaks of the home of
the free and the land of the brave,

but in an instant will kill or discredit the people that won't
stand for their name?

Unfortunately, I stood for the country and would have
given my life for those that believe I don't belong.

Stood for the country that has oppressed my people for
so long,

Stood for a country that when my time was up was no
longer standing for me,

Stood for a country that I realized does and will always see
me as an enemy.

So now I sit for the country of false promises and lies,

Sit for the country that will never hear my people's cries,

Sit for the country that will look at my people and never
give them a chance to be free,

I will sit for the rights for the people that look like me.

ARTIST STATEMENT

My name is Sieara Washington. I am the 32-year-old mother of a preteen son living in Minnesota. I began writing poetry around the age of 11 to express my emotions in a way that others can understand. This submission, "Do I Stand?", illustrates the internal battle I have at times with being a Black woman with a military background. There are times I feel the honor and pride of having served my country. At other times I feel disappointment and anger at the way people who look like me are treated in this country regardless of their contributions to society. To be a woman veteran is to have your veteran status constantly questioned. There have been many occasions when people have automatically assumed that the veteran present for an event is the male (father, brother, husband) accompanying me rather than myself. Countless times I have corrected their assumptions proudly stating "I'm the veteran, a Marine Afghanistan veteran to be exact" only to then be drilled with questions as though I am a liar. It is difficult to watch these same people who disregard and disbelieve my veteran status question whether kneeling during the national anthem is disrespectful to vets. "Do I Stand?" is my answer to this question.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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