

Land of the Free

"America, to me, is like a prison,"
says the girl in the low-cut top,
purple hair falling past her shoulders,
and silver piercings lighting up her face.

And I wondered what kind of prison
lets you choose your own clothes,
change your hair,
pierce your skin,
and question its authority

*"There's gun violence.
There's hate.
There are people who are afraid," she says.*

She says it like freedom
means everyone gets along
like it means the government works in harmony
like it means perfection.

I want to tell her—
cover your shoulder.
Cover your knee.
Wrap yourself in fabric
and tell me
how free you feel.

Let your hair return
to the color you were born with.
And tell me
how free you feel.

Take the metal from your ears,
your nose,
your skin.
And tell me
how free you feel.

Live beneath a law
that tells you how to look,
and tell me
how free you feel.

No, America is not perfect.
We have violence.
We have hatred.
We have wounds.

But freedom was never
the promise of perfection.

It was the promise
that my hair is mine.
That my clothes are mine.
That my voice is mine.
That I can stand beneath
a timeless truth and still say,
I disagree.

Two hundred and fifty years
and we are still arguing
about what freedom means.

Maybe that is America.
Not a country without chains or restrictions,
but rather a country
dedicated to letting her people
decide for themselves

And still—
I look at the girl
with purple hair and piercings
and I think:

How lucky we are
to be free enough
to get to call our country a prison.

How lucky we are
to be free enough
to argue about freedom.

How sweet, to me,
is the land
that lets us ask
whether we are free—

and answer
for ourselves.