

**To The Indigenous Woman, a poem by Ryan Red Corn**

To the Indigenous woman  
I'm sorry we have not fought harder for you

I am the dysfunctional man

I will borrow your forgiveness like I always have,  
and you will be there for me like you always are

Ask her, and she will tell you

I stole her tongue

Replaced it with guilt

Saddled it with blame  
and rode off on it like a horse

Choose your words like chess pieces  
burn your hopes like cedar  
pull that smoke over you like a blanket  
put a cigarette out on you cause I can

Pray that someone hears you

Hold tight to the last thing anyone could take from you  
clutch it and pretend it's still there  
even after its gone

To doctors without clues  
for say nothing neighbors  
do nothing attorneys  
and quiet parents with no memories

Thank you.  
You make all of this possible.  
We couldn't fail these women without your help.

For the woman and her baby left for dead by the police in her home,  
while they gave a ride to her attacker back to his house  
To the girlfriend punched in her pregnant stomach

To the wife who took the beatings so her kids wouldn't have to  
To the daughter who found a man as abusive as her dad  
To the coed who will never ever go to the nine again  
To the restraining order as strong as the paper its made from  
To the shelter with not enough beds

I give 1000 sweats for rape victims  
1000 doctorings for husbands  
1000 prayer ties for courage  
1000 meetings for silence  
1000 songs for patience  
1000 fires... for enough light...  
to fill a room ....to reflect off a mirror the size of the moon  
just so we can see ourselves for what we are.

Complicit.

I dare you to protect them Mr. President  
I dare you to make laws for them Mr. Senator  
I dare you try to stop me Tribal Chairman  
I dare you to go look for me Police officer

For every 1000 Native women in your district,  
330 of them will be sexually assaulted  
88% of the perpetrators will be non-Native.

Every piece of legislation needs a champion.  
Not all champions are leaders.  
Not all leaders are men.  
Not all kisses are wanted  
Not all laws are consensual  
They trespass her body like they trespass this land  
In the corner of a HUD home  
In the back seat of an old car  
In a court room  
In every hall of every government

We fail them

The terrorist threat is in the same house  
in the same car  
goes to the same school  
works at the same job  
and a threat 10 times more likely to murder her than anyone else.

The war is in the home  
Living room battle grounds  
bathroom infirmaries  
backseat trenches  
fists like tanks  
sex like a war trophy  
under treaties of silence  
she whispered to me  
Please  
Please stop  
I am your wife  
I am your sister  
I am your mother  
I am your daughter

You are supposed to protect me  
You are supposed to be a warrior  
Protect me from you,  
from him,  
from all of them.

Tell me you have daughters  
Tell me you don't want this for them  
Tell me you won't joke about this with your friends  
Tell me you won't forget we talked  
Tell me you will do something

Do something.