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11th Grade / Poetry

West High School

**Listen to Me**

*It’s nice to meet you.*

*How are you doing?*

*Are you okay?*

Looks of confusion fill my vision.

It dawns on me what I forget:

These words are not in their dictionary.

This is not their language.

*I need something from you.*

*Did you hear what he did the other day?*

*Have you seen what she’s wearing today?*

These they welcome with open arms

And my friends are now at ease.

This is what they understand.

This is the new language.

*I demand. I want. I need.*

*Slay, Savage, Ratchet.*

*Lame, Retard, Mental.*

If hearing this feels like deja vu,

don’t worry.

You’re not alone.

You’re a member of modern American society.

When did the narrative become so cruel?

The flames of texts on my screen seem so biting.

When did the shades of our skin, the people we love, the grades we get

Become slurs to coin and insult to wield.

In a sea of faces surrounding me,

enveloped within all the bright screens,

they’re staring, not seeing.

With the endless stream of

Words that pour out of their mouths,

they’re talking, not listening.

We cannot be driven apart by the harsh rhetoric of today.

We cannot accept this as the new normal.

This is not the world I want to live in.

This is not our language.