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Somewhere in America

In many countries around the world, citizens are oblivious to the injustices happening around them, due to the facade that the government presents to them. Rhiannon McGavin, Zariya Allen, and Belissa Escobedo's poem, "Somewhere in America," captures the struggle of victims of racism, rape, homophobia, and income-inequality. Through their use of tone, mood, and diction, McGavin, Allen, and Belissa emphasize how censorship by the education system only amplifies the inequalities and injustices that are in the United States.

The poem begins with McGavin, Allen, and Belissa's highly censorious statements about the education system in many states who place more of an emphasis on banning books, than banning guns from children. This is illustrated in the lines below when the speaker states:

Now somewhere in America
There is a child holding a copy of *Catcher in the Rye*
And there is a child holding a gun
But only one of these things have been banned by their State Government
And it's not the one that can rip through flesh (10-16)

Later the speaker states:

There are things missing from our history books.
But we were taught that it is better to be silent
than to make them uncomfortable (37-39)

The speaker is referring to how the government in the United States filters books because they are too explicit, but they allow hatred to be spread by permitting the use of firearms. The speaker is angry at the illusion of fairness that is presented to the people, all while the government brainwashes their children indirectly. Through the censorship of educational resources, children aren't exposed to all perspectives of political situations; they are limited to the ones that depict the beliefs of their state.

During the seventh stanza of the poem, "Somewhere in America," the speaker's topic shifts from censorship to income inequality. This is conveyed in McGavin, Allen, and Belissa's poem in the following lines:

The preppy kids go thrift shopping cos they think it sounds real fun
But we go cos that's all we got money for
Cos mama works for the city
Mama only gets paid once a month (59-62)

In the previous lines of the poem, the speaker attempts to communicate that there is a disparity between those of different economic classes. Within this stanza of the poem, the poet's use of informal diction that holds a negative connotation, indicates that they are angry at this issue. Their diction influences the reader's emotional response. The poem ignites a feeling of annoyance and anger within the reader. Many people are not aware of what is happening in this country, and ignorance prevents anything from being done to solve these issues. This poem allows readers to be concerned and well-informed about these important issues.

At the very end of the poem McGavin, Allen, and Belissa combine all these social issues in America to communicate their main point. This is shown in the last two lines of the poem:

A teacher never fails

Only you do
In every state in America
The greatest lessons
Are the ones you don't remember learning (88-92)

We learn more by example than we do from a fixed lesson. Throughout the unequivocal slam poem, "Somewhere in America," McGavin, Allen, and Belissa, explore how the suppression of the truth magnifies discrimination and prejudices. When children are younger, they are taught to repress their opinions and go with the flow. As they near maturity, the media adds to this brainwashing, in order to prevent people from thinking for themselves, so that the real issues can not be solved.