Landed in America

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Abstract
Poem about immigrant parents written by first-generation American.

Keywords
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Disciplines
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Comments
Runner-up for the 2017 Marion Zulauf Poetry Prize.

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Landed in America

1.
My parents like to remind me that they came to this country on a plane and not on a boat. They were financially stable. Their only desire was to give us every opportunity they didn't have growing up in West African poverty. So, they came to the land flowing with milk and honey but what nobody told them is that, here in America, the bees are currently going extinct and the milk is treated with rBST.

2.
This is what our country is coming to,
You mumbled these words to your table giving my mother a sideways glance.
You didn’t like her head wrap. She doesn’t wear it for religious reasons, though, I guess that’s what you thought. But...even if she did, so what? She wraps herself with the scarf because she’s slightly insecure about her gray hairs yet too demure to dye them.
To me, though, they aren’t gray but silver no...

       platinum.

Every single one of those platinum strands tells a story. Like the time a man stole her wedding band leaving instead a knife’s gash in her right shoulder.

Or the several nights awake by my brother’s side
as the doctors told her he
may not last the night,
may not win the fight.
Nights she spent praying
that my other brother James
wouldn’t live up to his name
as the supplanter.

Let me tell you what our country
is coming to,
it is a place where
people like you
fail to wrap their heads
around the concept that there are those
who are different.
A place where you can judge
a woman by what she wears yet
know nothing about how
life’s worn her.

The simple truth is that your statement,
This is what our country is coming to
says more about you than it does us.