**Feda Eid Artist Statement:**
My discomfort with the title of this series is a reflection of what I've felt living here most of my life, but particularly the years when I was a teenager. In 2001, 9/11 happened and I was a 15 year old freshman in high school. I was confidently unconfident in so many ways, and everyday I stepped out of the house with a fabric flowing from my head. It was the year I experienced harm and violence towards my body. After school one day, a classmate approached me and said he would protect his country and had a knife. What happened after I can barely remember, I think the only "protecting" my mind could comprehend was shutting itself off. If this was his country, then what country was I from? That question would be reinforced many times throughout my life as I tried to be at home in a place where I never felt at home.

After the Muslim ban in 2017, I felt that traumatic experience re-enter my body. The first image from this series was created that year titled Artificial Sweetener and featured a fabric rose shoved in my mouth. The rose, a symbol of heritage and heirlooms, the official flower of the US. I was exhausted, feeling constantly defined by mass produced stereotypes. One day I was under my kitchen table picking something up off the floor and I hit my head coming back up, noticing the sticker under the table that read "Made in USA". I started to think about what being a product of this nation means, both myself and my classmate expressing self through the things we have consumed. How could pride be born out of soils that have witnessed massacres, how many ways has American "pride" been used as a weapon of violence? A knife- a tool like many tools, that could be used to cut crops in order to nourish my body, or a tool that could take my life.

Growing up I felt the constant tension of cultures colliding, between the world my parents fled from, a place also a product of colonialism and imperialism, and the world I created in my bedroom. The sound of the Fugees cassette, The Score, constantly rewinding and playing in the background, "Ooh, la-la-la, It's the way that we rock when we're doin' our thing, Ooh, la-la-la, It's the natural la that the Refugees bring, Ooh, la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la, Sweet thing." I loved to play dress up and experiment with my older sister's drugstore makeup that was in a plastic grocery bag. I would sneak into my mothers drawers looking for scarves to "borrow" and see the swirling embroidery of my moms abayas and my dads traditional collared robes. My parents had a style that could not be emulated, never forced or assimilated, just them. Textile landscapes started to form in my mind. Mixed with the patterns of summers spent in Lebanon, of my grandmother's couch cushions she sewed by hand. She was a seamstress and almost everything in her home was made with her special touch.

When I learned photography my senior year of college, I finally found a space to express all the swirling chaos of my identity, something beautiful started to bloom. I felt a portal opening up between the past and present and the future I wanted to create. My ancestors were calling to me, a divine force was moving through my hands, creation and Creator as one. It has been a full circle experience teaching photography and visual storytelling to five amazing BIPOC teens as an artist in residence at Eliot School of Fine and Applied Arts, Artists Jacob DePalm, Elian Feliz, Hajar El Ayoubi, Rose Gelin, and Marie Liza Manigat. Each day realizing how lucky I was to get to know them and guide them as they walked through some of their own discomforts with

home and identity. The self portraits they crafted, rooted from their own experiences, have been so magical and emotional to witness. The sharing of this collective work alongside original pieces from *(Made in USA)* also an invitation for all to reflect on our place within the violent structures of this country. What will we continue to grow and make here? How will we use the tools we have been given, to heal, to transform, and stitch a new tapestry for collective liberation?