

## Flowers

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### Reflections from the Author

We live in a society which begs us to fit neatly into boxes. We are taught there is one “right” way to be pretty, smart, and successful. When we fall outside of those perceived norms, we often face prejudice. I find that, as a woman, these expectations are specific to my sexuality. As a future social work practitioner, it is my goal to stand up stronger and speak up louder against the slut-shaming, body-shaming, and sexualizing that women are constantly fighting to escape on a daily basis. “Flowers” is a poem I wrote in response to the realization that the words we speak and the judgments we make quickly turn into the culture we create for ourselves. I not only wrote about the issues faced by a woman, like myself, living in a rape culture, but I also discuss the pain and stigmatization faced by anyone who does not “live up” to society’s expectations of them. My hope is “Flowers” and the video that goes along with it will help people to recognize the impact a rape culture has, and they will be inspired to stand up against it with love and kindness.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YNkPmyOFreU&feature=youtu.be>

#### Flowers by Alexandra Kontos

I live in a rape culture

I live in a body-shaming culture

I live in a stigmatizing, idolizing, patronizing culture

I live in a sexist culture

I live in a racist culture

I live in a pressure filled, dreams-are- killed, hateful culture

I come from a place where I am told to be one thing

But for that same thing, what pain it will bring

Be skinny, but curvy

Be outgoing, but “lady like”

Show some skin, cover up

Be seductive but not a slut

Just be natural but without imperfections

Be intelligent but less than a man

It’s been this way ever since I began

What were you wearing? Had you been drinking?

Don’t walk alone without a man by your side

Know how to run, know how to fight and hide

Pain gets called PMS

It’s your body but you’re a murderer

Just honest, sign away your rights

You know you can trust me, but betray you they might

He’s black and I’m white, oh is that not alright?

Don’t tell a soul, they won’t understand

Cover the scars just above your hand

There are more guns in the streets than love in our hearts  
 “They’re all junkies they deserve it”  
 “We have enough problems in our own country”  
 “It’s a choice they made”, as if you know better  
 Oh when will it stop? Will it ever get better?

I live in a rape culture  
 I live in a body-shaming culture  
 I live in a stigmatizing, idolizing, patronizing culture

I live in a sexist culture  
 I live in a racist culture  
 I live in a pressure filled, dreams are killed, hateful culture  
 But...

I also live in a loving culture  
 I live in a hopeful culture  
 I live in a forgiving, faithful, and future-oriented culture

I live in a growing culture  
 I live in an accepting culture  
 I live in a beautiful, wonderful, diverse culture

I can reach out my hand and around me I will find,  
 People more than willing to spend the time  
 To help me, love, and never leave me  
 To have me and hold me

We are all just like flowers

Some old,  
 Some new,  
 Some gold,  
 And some blue

Each so special, so beautiful, so one-of-a-kind  
 Take a look inside, so much more you will find

But we cut each other down,  
 Until we are nothing more than flowers on the ground  
 To be lost but never found  
 Into the wind no where bound

But a smile received in time,  
 Can plant a small seed in the mind  
 Such a simple act you will find  
 Can turn into something oh so kind

Teach me from the start, that I am more than meant to be torn apart  
 By the words and the lies that roll off of your tongue like fire

Teach me to be loved and embraced for all that I am  
 So I can teach them, teach them just that

Love them like He does for *who* they are not *in spite* of who they are

Love harder, faster and stronger,  
For they live in a rape culture  
They live in a body-shaming culture  
They live in a stigmatizing, idolizing, patronizing culture

They live in a sexist culture  
They live in a racist culture  
They live in a pressure filled, dreams are killed, hateful culture

Show them that they can create a loving culture  
a hopeful culture  
a forgiving, faithful, and future-oriented culture

I live in a rape culture... but *never* will that rape culture live in me.