

**Abi Zakarian**  
**We Are Our Mountains**

**Bush Theatre Protest Series**

When I am at my most broken ebb and lost in rivers flooding red, when I have that crack in my throat as I try to get the words out again, when I twist my fingers to speak, to say, look at the caravans of us, look at the emptying streets, look at the faces like mine in anguish as they flee.

I see the gridlocked lines of cars, a hundred thousand souls dragging suitcases on roads not meant for this, with armfuls of plastic carrier bags, the amount of which you would tut at, forgetting the lives stuffed into them no time before we cease again.

I see this as a mirror that shows me faces like mine, but barely there, and I tightly hold the gold coin around my neck. All that is left of a family with names you could never say. When I am asking for something, anything. When I think this time, this time there will be an outpouring, a demonstration so huge petitions and demands, when my voice breaks with the weight of it all, that's when you say it's not a competition.

And the mountain I am thought I was crumbles, falls, disappears again and I gulp. I eat that sentence from the air where you left it hanging, meant to shame me, cloak me, dynamite those cliffs our great grandparents were hewn from too.

And as I pause and breathe back in the centuries of dust, I want to know, how comfortable do you have to be to say such a thing to me? Looking not at me, not seeing my specific skin, my specific eyes, my specific nose. How comfortable in your own ignorance What do you imagine the prize would be for this competition you have placed us in? To not be unalived, as the phrase goes now. To not be cleansed so comprehensively, as if we are a plague. To not be unrestored from a fresco on a wall in a church that never existed except in the moments the bulldozers came.

Who wins, do you think, in this competition we never entered? As we stand burning in front of your morning breakfast or freezing to death, starved in an empty field as you scroll to find an acceptable tag. It's not a competition. No matter the boots that tread over a flag you cannot place or even care to try. It's not a competition. I run this race you placed me in not because I want to win, but because I refuse to die. I refuse to fade away. I am resolute in my existence. I am the grit in your eye. It's not a competition. If you can say this to me, you should be ashamed. It's not a competition.

And yet you cannot erase us from foothills to summit across every ragged peak you will not erase us because we will never end.

You can never erase us because we are our mountains.

**Slide reads:**

Learn about the 2023 ethnic cleansing of over 120,000 indigenous Armenians from Artsakh:  
[www.aqbu.org/artsakh](http://www.aqbu.org/artsakh)

Please donate to help alleviate the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Armenia:

[www.agbu.org/global-relief](http://www.agbu.org/global-relief)

Find out more about the 1915 Armenian Genocide: [www.armenian-genocide.org](http://www.armenian-genocide.org)

Only 32 countries officially recognise the 1915 kills of 1.5 million Armenians as a genocide.  
The UK is not one of them.

**Credits:**

Writer: Abi Zakarian

Performer: Jessie Bodrossian

**End slide reads:**

Bush Theatre Protest Series

We believe the connection between art and protest is vital.

The Bush Theatre's Protest series is a platform for artists to shed light on injustices that persist in our world.

[bushtheatre.co.uk/protest](http://bushtheatre.co.uk/protest)