

AFTER SEEING

© 2026 Zhenyang Wu
For viewing only

Zhenyang Wu

New York is where I live where I go to class.
I have walked past these flags
many times before.

But that day I felt something different.

The flag above the station
seemed heavier than I remembered
Like I am getting crashed.

I took out my camera
I suddenly felt
as if someone or something might be watching

a police officer
a camera
or simply the space itself



I came to this place
because I knew what happened here.

Police cars filled the street.

But the building itself
said nothing
so silent

No trace of protest
No trace of arrestments
No sign that anything had happened here.

I took this photograph
A police walked toward me.

He opened my holder for no reason
runied one of the film of mine.

He told me this was a sensitive area.
He asked me to leave.



Not far from the hotel
someone had painted:

FUCK ICE

I set up my camera
and exposed a sheet of film.

That police officer who just ruined this film
somehow followed me.

He asked to see my passport and student ID

For a moment, my mind went blank.

I did exactly what he told me,
which I don't even remember.

He let me go.

I walked away faster and faster,
wanting only
to leave that place.



One night I was in bed
I said to myself
I have to go to Minneapolis.

I wanted to see the street where everything happened.

Not because I understood it.
But because I couldn't stop thinking about it.

When I told people about the trip,
they became quiet.

Some asked if it was safe
Some suggested I stay
A few asked why I needed to go

I didn't have a clear answer.

I never told my parents
I knew they would worry.

I arrived at Minneapolis
I went to the street
where Renée Nicole Good was shot

The first thing I saw
was a small sign tied to a tree

Only Love Can Thaw

The words moved slightly
in the cold wind

For a moment
I just stood there



I walked slowly through the memorial

Some flowers had already begun to fade
The candles had burned out
A piece of cardboard was tied to a tree

People from the neighborhood stopped to talk

They told me
this was not a simple event

Their lives had been disrupted
It used to be a joyful community

People still came to leave flowers

They stood quietly for a moment
then stepped away

No one spoke loudly

The whole street seemed to be holding its breath



I stopped in front of the tree

A single flag
was tied to it

Half American
Half Mexican

It moved slowly in the wind

Below it
someone had written
a long passage from The Lord of the Rings

It stayed still in the wind

Cars passed along the street
The flag kept moving



Across the street
A harp was being played

The banner above her read:

Rest in Power Alex

I stood for a long time
just listening

The memorial felt calm,
almost gentle

The further I walked toward city
The fewer sign about ICE I could see

Everything looked peaceful
But I did not stay long
I ran, ran from nothing



I checked into the hotel where ICE agents stayed

I am not sure why I did it

Maybe I wanted to challenge something
Maybe I only wanted to confront my fear.

I made this photo
I lay on the bed with my shoes and all my cloths

The bed felt unsafe
The room was quiet
The light were warm

Everything felt completely normal

As if nothing had ever happened

I could not sleep

The wall stared at me
the whole night

Outside,
the city continued



