

Finding My Home in Psychic Restlessness

by Lizeth Gutierrez

“Because I, a mestiza
continually walk out of one culture
and into another
because I am in all cultures at the same time,
alma entre dos mundos, tres, cuatro,
me zumba la cabeza con lo contradictorio.
Estoy norteada por todas las voces que me hablan
Simultáneamente.”
– Gloria Anzaldúa

Gloria Anzaldúa is my academic godmother. She has provided me the tools to create a sense of home. A space of survival. A space to call my own in the academy. This piece is inspired by Anzaldúa’s work, specifically her writing in *Borderlands/La Frontera*. Anzaldúa provided me the tools to name my restlessness. “Finding My Home in Psychic Restlessness” is about my journey to self-discovery. In this poem I recite ‘culture’ and ‘race’ as homogenous markers of identity only to strategically address the multiple identities I wear on my body. I do not seek to homogenize identity or discipline racial categories of identification. Culture and identity, as Anzaldúa’s writing reveals, are complex, multifaceted and fluid.

I wrote this piece when I was an undergraduate student at Grinnell College. As a current PhD student at Washington State University this poem continues to speak to me in painful ways. I am a first generation Chicana college student from Los Angeles, California who decided to pursue her Bachelor’s degree in small town Grinnell, Iowa. I oftentimes felt dislocated there and swore to myself that I would never go back to rural towns. I did not belong in those spaces. Ironically, my distaste for small towns brought me back to a similar rural town: Pullman, Washington. Maybe I am a masochist. Perhaps it is in that masochism that lies my sense of home. Who knows, but it is with this knowledge that I offer you a piece of who I am.

!Ya no!

No quiero sentirme marginalizada por tu hipocresía

Me exotizas por ser Latina.

Me llamas “lazy” por ser Mexicana.

Y te burlas de mi acento porque no es como el tuyo.

Tú dices "pizza" cuando yo digo "piksa."

You tell me I can achieve the American dream, and yet set boundaries that aim to intimidate me and make me question my own abilities.

Si, vivo en un lugar de contradicciones.

I am in a college where I am the "exotic Latina," pero soy la "outsider" en mi familia.

La "pocha."

La "ya te crees muy miss thing porque vas a coh-ledge"

No me encuentro ni aquí, ni allá.

Why do you make me feel like I have to choose only one culture?

Soy mestiza, una hybrid, una mixture.

Anzaldúa me lo grita al oído in my dreams.

I, like Anzaldúa, believe in the new Latina consciousness.

Una conciencia que reconoce y tolera las contradicciones de mis dos culturas.

I love frijoles y las tortillas hechas a mano, and let's not forget the smell of el cilantro en la salsa roja.

Y adoro el crispy chicken sandwich with large fries de McDonalds.

Soy Mexicana como mi abuela, like my mother who must constantly fight against the machismo of our patriarchal culture.

Y soy Americana: conquering my dreams and goals a como de lugar is the mentality of my gobierno capitalista.

Tú te sigues sintiendo perdida, abandoned, ahogada en un mar that restricts your identity

because it tells you constantly that you are not enough Mexican, ni suficientemente Americana.

Date cuenta that you are more than one culture, no te de vergüenza, no te escondas.

Do not let the waves of assimilation trap you.

No te dejes.

Nada. Nada más rápido. Defiendete, you can do it.

Our history has shown us that Chicanas are guerrilleras.

Tú como yo somos la negotiation of two distinct worlds.

Anzaldúa dice que vivas sin fronteras.

No dejes que la corriente del mar te lleve.

Do not let it make you choose one culture over the other.

¡Lucha!

Lucha por tu crossroads.

This internal fight no acaba hasta que hagas tu propia negociación de identidad.

Revolutionize your sense of self.

No eres prisionera.

You are not less than one culture or more than the other.

You are all cultures.

La güera. La negra. La india. La mestiza.

Eres la voz de la nueva Chicana and you have the inner-strength to create your third space of survival.

A space Anzaldúa so proudly calls “una conciencia de mujer.”

Lizeth Gutierrez is a graduate student in Critical Culture, Gender, and Race Studies at Washington State University. She researches representations in popular culture of gendered and raced Latinidades and is particularly interested in the commercialization of mainstream Latinidad in relation to U.S. discourses on second-class citizenship.

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