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Cover Image courtesy of Yailyn Flores Vazquez

## Sister Mary Faith Schuster Award Winner

### La mano de mi chana

Yailyn Flores Vazquez

La mano de mi chana  
I was raised by my grandmother  
I used to stay over for the weekends  
I used to take her hand every night while sleeping  
I used to help her because she felt old.

but when I came to the U.S.  
she stayed alone.  
Now, who is going to sleep with her?  
Who is going to take her hand at night?  
Who is going to help her?

But life works this way.  
And when we thought that  
The worst thing was being apart.  
We discovered that  
Arthritis had invaded her body

She had doctor appointments,  
Stays at the hospital, intensive therapy  
And I was not there.  
All that we wished for  
Was to be with each other.

I remember the last time  
I saw her  
She hugged me  
Almost like she was saying her last goodbye.  
I am scared that it might be the last time  
I see her alive.

The doctor prescribes more medicine and pills,  
She has restrictions.  
She feels weaker every day.  
She wants me to be with her.  
But she knows that it is not possible  
Because some stupid paper stops me.

She is alone on her couch,  
My old lady finds it hard to stand by herself,  
She is alone, she feels lonely  
Wishing for her family to come back home  
She stays strong.  
She is a lovely woman,  
that I am scared to lose  
I promised myself  
That I will take care of her life  
As she once took care of mine.

Death is something that we cannot escape.  
So I will always hate the day that she leaves  
Scared of what it would be  
When she no longer is here  
Then what reaction should I have  
When I see her laying down?  
Closed in a grave, no longer alive.  
I know that in tears I'll drown.

But what if I'm not even there  
To see what it is like  
Would it be better or worse?  
To not be by her side?  
It feels like a curse  
Because I promised  
That in her last moments, laughs  
Smiles and even in her coughs  
I was going to be there.

Feelings of not being able  
To take care of her grave  
Makes me feel less brave  
I just want to be there,  
To take care of her,  
So, when she goes...  
I know that she will  
Watch me  
From up there.



## **Sister Mary Faith Schuster Award Winner**

### **Collage of Faces**

Yailyn Flores



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## **Sister Mary Faith Schuster Award Winner**

### **Bilingualism and the Betterment of Cultures**

Gam Pham

In recent years, scientists have begun to show that bilingualism can have a profound effect on the human brain and improving cognitive skills in many fields. It is also one of the important aspects to discover profound beauty in literary works. Through the art form of language, bilingual literature not only plays a role of beauty but also creates a hidden and deep layer of meaning. It shows well the content of the work, highlighting the artistic style of the author, and creating aesthetic beauty for the nations. Similar to other materials that create art, bilingualism creates the values of intangible objects; requiring readers to make the most of their ability to observe, ponder, imagine, and so on, in order to deeply appreciate the artistic image that bilingual literature through the authors writings. It is an interesting realm for people who enjoy learning bilingual literature. Therefore, in this article, I will share valuable lessons in understanding bilingual literature with the value of bettering humanity and the conservation of cultures.

Bilingualism can help me have much critical ability in anything around my life. I have learned that the element - related potential, mind, and the brain of a person affects positively. Many bilingual experts say in the article "ACTFL- About the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages" that "Bilingual people have sharper cognitive skills and keep their brain alert and active even when only one language is used. Grey matter responsible for processing language, storing memory and dictating attention spans. Bilingual individuals have denser grey matter compared to their monolingual counterparts." And in Washington Post, June 9, 2014, Doyle said bilingual studies contribute to brain development and overall learning. Bilingual texts can help students early to improve cognitive skills and academic performance because students have to control the two languages they know. This also means that the two or multiple languages potentially compete for cognitive resources. Bilinguals must acquire a way to control or regulate that competition so as not to erroneously use the unintended language or to lose fluency in each language.

In addition, bilingual texts can help readers to get cognitive flexibility. In any social activity, human beings often use language to communicate their thoughts and feelings, to connect with others, and identify with the human culture, and to understand the world. It is an important fact to create a vivid world within the persons. Moreover, through its many experiments, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages website cites that [learning another language helps students outperform when compared with students who do not learn, in divergent thinking ability, IQ tests, and multiple tests].

As a personal experience, being bilingual helped me to increase my understanding of my native tongue and treasure it more. It is not all languages are the same in their Grammarly structures, pronunciation, etc. but each of them has various rules to use with its structure and organization. I learned that studying a new language means that we have to learn the basic rules for words and how they come together. Furthermore, as we learn another language's structure and rules, our native language will become a frame of reference for comparison for the new language, and then we will develop a better understanding of its conventions. When becoming bilingual people, we can deal easily in difficult texts through the rules of their structures that assist our writing clearer and speaking more fluently.

Beyond that, the native language can help convey my nation's identity. This evidence is proved by the famous author Gloria Anzaldúa when she wants to display her nation's identity as a distinguishing property. In "How to Tame a Wild Tongue", she exposes her own experiences and her maternal language Spanish *that* distinguished with their own tongue and accent. The author asserts that forcing someone to only speak another language is near impossible; the language of a person is the own way of speaking of the person. "My 'home' tongues are the languages I speak with my sister and brothers, with my friends." From seeking identity of her and her nation, Anzaldúa talks about her Chicana life in a time full of

immigration controversies where Latinos living in the United States struggled to find their national identity and a language to speak freely in a mixture of both English and Spanish. Thus, our voices show our own identities.

Moreover, our native language is like our mother's milk, the blood that nourishes our national spirit. It laid a solid foundation for me to continue to build our sure home of knowledge so that we could reach out to a wider world, a world of knowledge of other nations. As Doris Sommer says: "Bilingual effects are everywhere, in the ways we think, feel, relate and make art." As Byran said [Someone can't lead a second life, but learning in another language affords him the opportunity to add another dimension to his personality. Hence, he will have access to another system of thought and a new canon of literature, music, politics, and news. A second language essentially confers his membership in a second culture. Membership provides access to the people who communicate in that language. Learning to speak with other people in their native language will provide him with detailed insight into their lives. Sometimes just from basic and simplistic communication, the person may achieve nuanced, mature conversations; one's understanding of another's thoughts that deepen when they can share a language. Indeed, bilinguals can expand our life into the universe with our dreams of leading a life very different than others who do not learn or approach another language].

The art form of bilingualism is a gateway to another culture as Mary Louise Pratt calls the "contact zone". In her article "Arts of the Contact Zone," Pratt explains many terms that she believes are beneficial in gaining a further understanding of a literary piece. Key terms such as contact zone, autoethnography and transculturation are introduced in her essay. She describes contact zones as "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other,..." The contact zone is a space where groups with different beliefs or ideas intermingle that it may create a great vision for each other. Sometimes, it is even a traumatic story of the loss of a person or a family or a group. Bilingual literature is a special zone for nations in the world by sharing their stories from their hearts.

As a famous writer of Africa, p' Bitek used to express his vibration, sympathy for the lower classes, less respected in the family and society as the rural women in Acoli village. He presents the thing in the voice of a wife whose husband has made her feel despair and abandoned her.

"He says I am rubbish,  
He no longer wants me!  
In cruel jokes, he laughs at me,  
He says I am primitive,  
Because..."

The author's way is as the starting point for the change in mind and consciousness in the contemporary world. By expressing and sharing deep pain from the bottom of his heart, the author shows that we need to have deep sympathy for the complex problems and the difficult lives their characters are suffering from. How sorrowful is the wife abandoned by the husband, decrying not only her own differences but also her family and people with the essence of their nature and cultural traditions. With a lame comparison between the distinctiveness of the two cultures, the husband is very mediocre when he eliminates the cultural nature of his people by honoring and trying to cling to another culture for it became his:

"He despises Acoli dances  
He nurses stupid ideas  
That the dances of his people  
Are sinful,  
That they are mortal sins."

Likewise, this mourning is also evident in some American Vietnamese writers like Andrew Lam and Vuong Ocean.

In his book *Birds of Paradise Lost*, Andrew writes stories about his fellow human beings; He seemed to be in pain, pity, and sympathy. He talked about the pain of a husband who must leave his wife

behind in Vietnam and the crowd of lucky people left behind in Saigon. "A husband who gripping his wife helicopter in Saigon, she was dropped into the crowd of those left behind." Because of that, the man suffered from Tourette's syndrome. The content of the stories of Andrew Lam not only awakens a deep sadness. The content of the stories of Andrew Lam manifests a deep sadness that there is no way to alleviate or escape the Vietnamese immigrants in the United States. Although they are living in the United States, their souls seem to be living in Vietnam. Their homeland was where they grew up with happy, sad, and better experiences. From their sadness, many Vietnamese Americans have had troubles which lead to ending their lives. In the story "Birds of Paradise Lost", Lam quotes a letter from his friend, Mister Bac, who had left a suicide.

Mister Bac wrote the letter to the people of the free world, Communism has ruined my country. My homeland is in shambles, I am tormented by thoughts of my people living in despair under the cruel communist regime. I cannot sleep at night thinking about their suffering. I close my eyes and all I see are boat people drowning in the South China Sea and dissidents languishing in horrid prison conditions... May my death reveal to the civilized world the evil of the communist ideology and Godless demons who continue to drink the blood of my people. Perhaps, only when living in a free country as American, the author had the opportunity to scream bitter voice from his heart, which he could not emit in other places.

Ocean Vuong is a Vietnamese-American poet, essayist, and novelist. He is a recipient of the 2014 Ruth Lilly/Sargent Rosenberg fellowship from the Poetry Foundation, a 2016 Whiting Award, and the 2017 T.S. Eliot Prize for his poetry. He uses a foreign language (English mixed with his native language, Vietnamese) to write about the miserable efforts of his brothers and compatriots. It is like sharing with others, with the world, so that everyone can understand, sympathize and connect with each other. In his famous book *Night Sky with Exit Wounds*. Vuong mentions the horrors of the war and the pain of his parents, grandparents, and towards recounting the challenges of oneself growing up:

"Young enough to believe nothing  
will change them, they step, hand in hand,  
into the bomb crater. the night full  
of black teeth. His faux Rolex, weeks.

...

with cricket cries. Show me how ruin makes a home out of hip bones."

He writes of the rough sea voyages endured by immigrants trying to make their way to America — ocean voyages that bring to mind both the hopeful pilgrimage of pilgrims and the forced middle passage endured by slaves — and he also describes refugee camps:

"Flung onto a sinking boat, splash the kapok's bark  
through rot and iron of a city trying to forget  
the bones beneath its sidewalks, then through  
the refugees camp sick with smoke and half-sung..."

Vuong sees himself as a storyteller or messenger who has to fulfill a moral responsibility towards those (as his parents, his grandparents, and his nation), who unable to recount their own stories because they could not speak.

These Vietnamese Americans as Lam, Vuong's relatives, and many other Vietnamese immigrants commonly did not choose to leave their homeland; however, they had to left by the complex condition of society. It is often the experience of exile itself that fueled their desire to tell their story as the ways for expressing deep mourning at the bottom of their hearts - the issue is that Doris Sommer calls "cultural melancholia." This culture often meets at many immigrants because these people have the past plays their nightmares of war/ poverty/ refugee camps and eventually, have to an exodus in a completely strange place.

Besides the concept of the artistic style of sharing the deepness of the human miseries of a person, a group, or of people. Bilinguals are clearly the means that can help authors communicate their ideas to preserve their language and culture. Through the ways to choose words, structures, and mixing styles



(code-switching), the author cleverly reminded readers about their precious heritage. These immigrant authors use code-switching to describe their characters' daily lives. The authors use code-switching for many reasons and different ways that are the most important reasons to manifest the special meanings of these writers. They are used some of their native words in their texts when they seem to cannot find the words in the foreign language that cannot manifest deeply the meanings as the native language. For example, the words "Minh oi" that Lam uses to show the special relationship between a married couple to call another partner (the husband to call his wife and inverse). The words in Vietnamese convey special meaning for the relationship. It is really hard to find words that can replace and have the role of the same words in English! In a similar way, Salman Rushdie also used many names and languages of his people to name famous places of the nation that they are today gradually forgotten. For example: "Alifbay" is an imaginary county. Its name comes from the Hindustani word for the 'alphabet '. "The Dull Lake", which also doesn't exist, gets its name from the Dal Lake in Kashmir, which does. Indeed, many authors use their own language style to impart young nations their quintessence of literature.

On the same line of using the style in bilinguals to conserve national culture, Young manifests subtly his ways in his poems. His style is traditional oral retelling stories/songs; It is a special way in Vietnamese literature in the past when many Vietnamese people could not go to school. Young's poems reflect vividly a warm scene happen in a peaceful village with an older is thoughtful to tell stories to a crowd of children sitting around. As my grandmother and other elders in Vietnamese villages, they tell country/ myth stories to the children in order to contribute to building up the children's dreams, morals, virtue. The style facilitates the widespread and rapid spread of folklore when many Vietnamese people are illiterate. It created and circulated through the oral route, folklore requires of artisans not only talent but especially memory. Through word of mouth, work can be both improvised and transmitted simultaneously to many individuals. Each individual participating in the folk process, soon becomes a wave point, acting as the initiator of a new transmission cycle. Vuong is a person who takes the musicality of the oral tradition and weds brilliantly in his love of the English language: "Không có gì bằng cơm với cá. Không có gì bằng má với con."—"There is nothing like rice and fish. There's nothing like a mum for a child. (Vietnamese proverb), or

"Don't you know? A mother's love  
neglects pride  
the way fire  
neglects the cries  
of what it burns. My son  
even tomorrow  
you will have today. Don't you know?"

How wonderful when Vuong's poems can illustrate a cultural way of a Vietnamese literature picture – It is actually a cultural heritage of the Vietnamese nation. More importantly, the style is used in the English language; it conveys another benefit. It is the role of reminding or preserves a style of Vietnamese literature for Vietnamese people in general and for Vietnamese Americans in private. Therefore Vuong is a person who speaks for his ancestors; especially speaking for those who have for some reason left their home country, now they want to preserve and commit to the quintessential essences of their national culture to the next generation.

Bilingualism is really the gateway into another culture as a chance to increase cultural awareness and in the world. Each individual person, family, nation not only has its deep pains, and their own difficulties, but also has a unique, rich and unique beauty. Bilingual texts are great tools to provide for authors to enrich interpersonal experiences and their readers with other foreign people such as building relationships, appreciating cultural values, and discovering their unique histories and traditions. Bilingualism is a wonderful thing in that it is like living in a global family with an abundance of cultural beauty in each nation. These combinations make the world of awareness in every heart of peoples in the world cohesion and harmonize with each other more closely.

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San Jose, Costa Rica. Geovany with pigeons. Photo by Geovany Alvarado.

## Sister Mary Faith Schuster Award Winner

### Letter

Leslie Rangel

December 8, 2019

Emilio,

I have always found it is easier to explain things in writing than the words. Although, I know that I might not make much sense to you now, but I know that this is something that you can keep and read later on when it will make sense. The other day you came to me like the little man that you are and asked me about our culture. I was shocked that at such a young age you were asking about that. I did not know what to answer because well to be honest to you, I really don't know. With the world being the way it is now it is hard to believe for anyone to give a straight one answer when they are asked that question. We now live in a world where so many cultures are blended together, it is what we call one big melting pot. It's not like the melting pot started in the last decade. Cultures blending together and people accustom different customs from different cultures and make them their own. For the most part, you will be automatically profiled as Mexican because of your looks and tongue, and yes, we are Mexican, but there is more to us than just being Mexican. I think it's easy to say that many people can say they at least belong to two if not more cultures.

I like to consider ourselves Mexican American. Growing up I was always told I was Mexican and well that was true! Your grandparents immigrated from Mexico to Kansas right before I was born. They brought their traditions and customs from Mexico with them as well. Before going to preschool, I remember eating menudo, flautas, pozole, enchiladas, tacos, bistec a la Mexicana, arroz y sopa de fideo on a daily basis. When the holiday's and special occasions came around there was tamales, tacos but not just any tacos, they were barbacoa tacos and buche tacos, there was capirotada, buñuelos, tres leches cake and flan. Food is such an important part to culture because it something that you can pass down to generation but not only that it brings memories, comfort, the feeling and belongingness and helps you remember where you come from. There were home cooked meals every day because your grandparents were not accustomed to eating out or spoke the language to try and venture out and try new things. As I grew older more things were added to the menu. Spaghetti, hamburgers, hotdogs, bbq ribs, turkey, lasagna, hot wing, cheesecake and apple pie. We started to go out and eat and discovered Chinese food, Italian Food and more American food. So now when the holiday's and special occasions come we will have mole and BBQ ribs, tamales and Thanksgiving dinner. Being able to enjoy and embrace foods from not just your homeland is such a beautiful thing and not only that but making it your own just makes you a more unique and culture individual, how cool is that?

Music would always fill our house. I knew who Los Bukis, Marco Antonio Solis, Vicente Fernandez, Selena, Juan Gabriel, Pedro Infante, and Jose Alfredo Jimenez were at a very young age. For our family, these were iconic musicians that represent our culture, well at least with the old generations. Now there is Gloria Trevi, Alejandra Guzman, Pedro Fernandez, Ramon Ayala, Julion Alvarez, Ricardo Arjona and Gerardo Ortiz to name a few. All these people I named are true Mexican artist that for the most part anyone in Mexico can identify or at least has heard their name. Music for our culture and well I think any culture pays a big part. Music speaks about what we go through, how we feel and helps us celebrate. It helps express what we want to say when just words once again aren't the easiest to use. Mexican music was all I heard growing up. As I got older and was exposed to different cultures and languages so much more was added to our playlist and go to songs. It started by adding artist like Celia Cruz, Mark Anthony,

Carlos Santana, Romeo Santos, Maluma, Prince Royce, Beky G and Ozuna in the Latin and Hispanic culture. Going beyond the Spanish language we added Michael Jackson, Madonna, Johnny Cash, Bob Marley, The Beatles, Luke Bryant, Bruno Mars, Aerosmith, Justin Timberlake and just so many that my hand would hurt trying to write them all. All to which the music is either relatable or just simply enjoyable. So now when we are celebrating a wedding, baptism or quinceañera you will hear “El Caballo Dorado” after the Chacha Slide, “La Puerta Negra” after “Vivir Mi Vida” or “Gasolina” after “24 Magic”. We now express ourselves and celebrate in many languages and genres, how awesome is that? Traditions keep our culture alive. We have our typical Mexican traditions like posadas during Christmas time, celebrating La Virgen de Guadalupe’s birthday, Dia De Los Muertos, El Dia de Independencia, Celebrating Christmas on Christmas Eve, having piñatas at our birthday parties and Quinceañeras. Living in the melting pot that we live in we have adopted many more traditions like Valentine’s Day, Christmas Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, going trick-or-treating on Halloween and having a cook out. That just keeps us busy every day of the month with the traditions that we continue to add to our own culture.

Our language is what also represents our culture. Now this is where it gets interesting because our tongue speaks many languages, it speaks Spanish, English and Spanglish. Growing up Spanish was all I knew. It wasn’t until I went to preschool that I learned to speak English, and you were the same. After that Spanglish came along. Like many people whose English is their second language and it is learned at a young age you began to start getting confused and you might think of a word in one language and then translate it in your head in the other language before letting it leave your mouth. Sometimes you just simply forget how to say one word in one of the languages and that is when the Spanglish comes out. Now you know because you experience it all the time that it just naturally happens without thinking about it. Unfortunately, Spanglish is not an “official” language many people will understand when you speak it and won’t think much of it, it’s an unofficial language that many recognize and speak.

Mexican-American is the culture that I would use to describe like you asked “what we are?”. I want you to understand that is not described as one thing. Though I say we are Mexican-American, we are our own type of Mexican American, there is not just one profile of being Mexican-American. That’s the beauty of Culture, you can make it your own. As you grow up you will adapt your own customs, pick up traditions, foods, music and words from different cultures and will make it your own. You get to pick “what you are?”, don’t let other people tell you “what you are?” you will decide that as you keep growing, you just grow up with some help and background with your culture, think of a place to get started. Then later when you’re older I will be asking you the question “what are you?” and I hope to get a more diverse answer than the one I have given you.

Love,  
Your Mom



Quakers and Pacifists, founders of Monteverde, Costa Rica. Photo by Paula CS



## Solitude

Gustavo Rosas

Social media opens our world to an enormous amount of information and helps us stay connected with people around the world, yet it stops our ability to think. For example, have you found yourself scrolling through Facebook and got out of it because it was boring just get back on it asking yourself what did you just do? The usage of social media has obstruct our ability to grow as a person, citizen, and as a friend. Authors like Sherry Turkle, Berkowits Roger, and William Deresiewics have all argued the importance of solitude. I can assure you most people today don't even know what solitude means or how to be in it. Although social media has been proven useful in many things, solitude is the only thing that can help you become a better Person.

Texting a friend that everything is going to be okay when they are in a time of need is not the same feeling as lending them a shoulder to cry on. Social media has given us the idea that a simple message can solve any problem we have with people. We have started to move from conversing with one another to just communicating thinking they are on in the same. But that isn't true, when we communicate we lose the emotions of a real conversation that we start to care less. Sherry Turkle illustrates that, "Human relationships are rich; they're messy and demanding," and when we converse, "we tend to one another," so we can truly understand and know each other. We need solitude to be able to help one another, because someone who is in solitude is able to be alone and gather their own thoughts (Turkle, 60).

There are essentially two realms, the private and the public from which we can either choose one or both. He who chooses not to enter the private realm due to fear of loneliness is choosing to also be thoughtless. Which is ironic because thoughtlessness is nourished by loneliness, and the private realm allows us to be thoughtful. The private realm is to be in solitude and people misinterpret the idea of solitude with the idea of loneliness. But loneliness is to feel the absence of others especially when lost among a crowd. When you enter the private realm you are not virtually alone, you are with yourself able to think beyond self interest and more into "Humanitas". (Solitude and the activity of thinking)

"Humanitas" as Berkowits describes is the thinking which is at the peak of humanity because it is neither objective or subjective (7). This type of thinking can only be shown through the public realm mainly in politics which can improve society. Although in modern time today a new realm rises, the social realm, which threatens both the public and the private realms. Social media obstructs the essence of solitude because it stops anyone from trying to be alone and also stops our ability to make better decisions for society. We get so many advertisements to manipulate us to make rash choices from little things as to what we buy to as big as who we elect as president. As less people look for solitude the less citizens start to think for themselves and just become thoughtless idealists living off the ideas of others. (Solitude and the activity of thinking).

Most people will argue that they need their phones in order to stay informed with a variety of things like with friends, family and society. And although you could do that using social media the majority of young people don't use it for that purpose, instead they use it to look at memes. When I was in high school, one student got caught by the teacher using their phone when they weren't supposed to. The teacher had asked for the phone and said they would return it by the end of the class, but the student had refused saying they were texting their parents about something important. When the teacher asked the student to unlock their phone and to show them, the student opened the phone and quickly tried to press the home button, but the teacher had taken it away fast enough to see they were just on facebook. Saying you need it to stay up to date is just an excuse to be able to have the phone with us at all times.

Solitude does not mean to be alone and away from everything and everyone at all times of your life. On the contrary when you are able to be in solitude you can be better informed from what you read and have stronger relationships with the people you meet and know. There are also better ways to get information then searching it up online. If you want to know how the weather is ask a friend and have a conversation, If you need further knowledge about something read a book about it or ask a teacher for help. Not to mention that the media has become more bias, it's getting harder to tell when an article or news cast is telling the truth about something or giving reliable information. When we choose to trust this outlets without doing full research we are choosing to not think for ourselves but rather to let others think for us.

As human beings I believe that in our subconscious mind we all strive to become known, acknowledged, and remembered. That is why we become so addicted to our cell phones, because it gives people the illusion that they're well known and liked by many. Most people in social media are personas not revealing how they really are but showing the self they want to be. We are becoming the era in which solitude is becoming a thing of the past not realizing the consequences that come with that. As Deresiewicz describes when losing solitude we lose, "propensity for introspection, that examination of the self that the Puritans, and the Romantics, and modernists placed at the center of spiritual life-of wisdom, of conduct". People nowadays are moving away from religion too, so they won't understand the concept that God stood alone above everyone else and Lucifer stood with a crowd and still lost to God in the battle.

If this keeps up it really will be the end of solitude, but there are simple ways to strive towards the path of solitude. William Powers describes many simple solutions from different renown philosophers in the digital age. For example, Pluto used to take a moment of peace with his friends by taking a walk, and today we can do that by simple leaving our phones and taking a calm walk outside. Like I had stated before, there is no need to be alone all the time, but there is also no need to have so many friends, keeping a small circle of friends will make a change. Going out and reading books could inspire you so much more than reading gossip tweets on twitter. Going into solitude isn't a race, taking it slowly and making small positive goals to improve yourself can go a long way after a while. (Powers 517-520)

Social media has taken over people's lives, but as long as there are those who choose to fight it and think on their own I don't think solitude will ever come to a complete end.

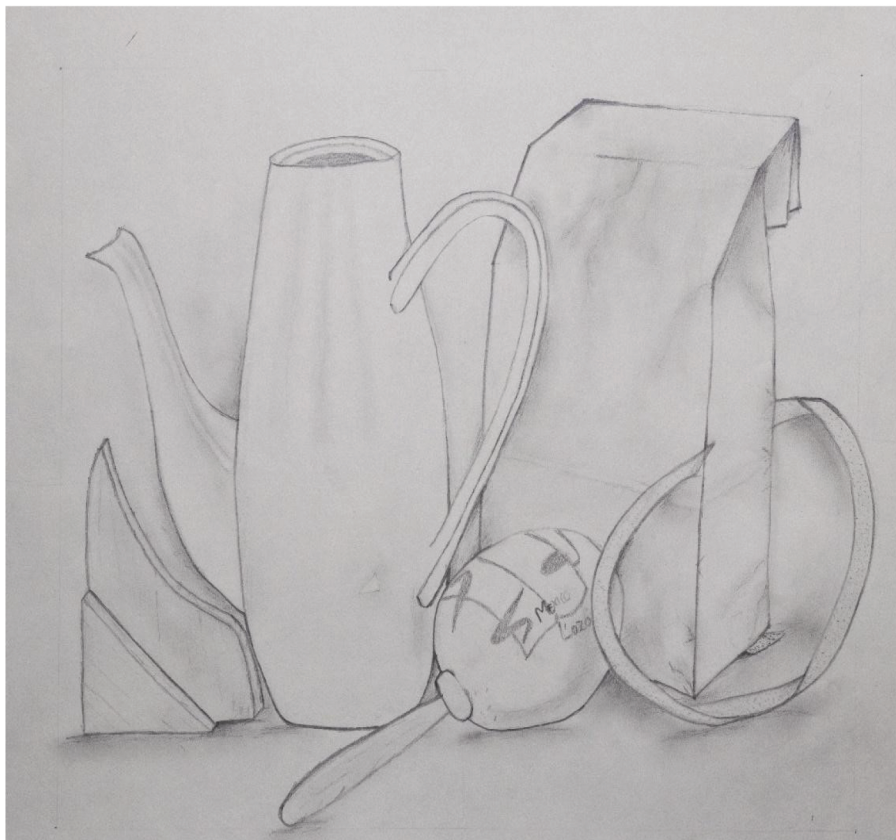
Solitude is something only a selected few could accomplish from years of practice and dedication, but that's not to say people can't achieve better things from just trying. I propose that even a little bit of solitude in one's life can change them over time to be someone better. And parents should educate their children about the importance of free time so they can grow up being able to think creatively. No child should have the latest Iphone with facebook installed just so they can stop bothering you, a child should be able to run free and think on their own. Social media may have a huge database with almost all information around the world, but it can't make someone a better person if it stops them from thinking on their own.

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Still Life

Yailyn Flores



Old Ways Won't Open New Doors

Yailyn Flores





## Out

Yazmin Bruno

Angela Valdez gave birth to a baby girl on a rainy Monday morning in Tijuana Mexico on March 5th, 2001. Angela was willing to do anything for her baby girl, Yazmin, and she understood how dangerous Tijuana was for two women to live alone in. In 2003, she decided that the best decision was to migrate to the United States in search of a better future. Demographers of the University of Texas at San Antonio and the University of New Hampshire, their research found that immigration from Mexico, both legal and illegal peaked in 2003. I was brought to the United States at such a young age I was completely clueless about the legality of my crossing. As a result of abandoning my home country, I became a foreigner in the land of opportunities. The government referred to me and my family as “illegal aliens”, essentially we left our humanity when we stepped into the United States.

Although I never really felt otherworldly or extraterrestrial, I was aware that I was different. I grew up in a predominantly white neighborhood and went to school where no other classmate was as dark as me. During lunch, I brought my traditional Mexican lunches that included handmade tortillas, my mom's black beans and her salsa made with love. The other kids, however, did not understand the significance behind my mother's traditional meals and made fun of me for it. Even though I was the same age, I was their classmate, we played in recess together, and we shared snacks, I would always be different, I would always be foreign.

This followed me until I was in middle school and transferred into USD 500, a low funded public school district where I was no longer the minority. I even made a friend who confessed to me she was also an “alien”. I was so excited I was no longer the only one. I came home and told my mother about the new friend I had made, that she too was different like me. However, her reaction was negative, she was upset that I had shared that I was undocumented. She told me I could never tell anyone else my secret, that if I did I would put us all in danger. The next day I told my friend to never tell anyone else that we were “aliens”, I told her it was dangerous, that people didn't like “aliens”. That was the first day I began to repress my identity. My mother taught me to suppress who I was, and though her lesson was formed out of fear, I was too young to comprehend it. All I knew was that I was not safe, that this country saw me and my family as threats and not people. That is why I lied whenever people asked me where I was born. I no longer claimed my Mexican heritage, as I associated it with being in danger.

I learned to embrace the United States and love what I had been taught an American was. I chased after the idea of the American Dream, I came up with my own. I wanted to study to become an immigration lawyer, so my family and I could no longer live in fear, so I could finally feel safe to claim my nationality. However, reality soon hit me, I was not American. Even though I grew up in the United States, I spoke English, and I studied hard in school, I would always be Mexican. The idea of being American no longer interested me, as I knew it was just something that I could never be. Instead, I taught myself to love my home country. I realized that being Mexican was in my blood, that if I was to leave my country behind, I was also leaving my family, our traditions, our music, our food and everything else. Embracing my culture, allowed me to feel closer to my family, but even then I realized I was different. I started to think about what going back to Mexico would be like, all my life is here in the United States, I had not been to Mexico in years. I spoke Spanish but I was most comfortable speaking English. I studied here, I have friends and family here, if I was deported, I would be clueless, I would not fit in. Even though I was Mexican, I was too American to be fully accepted.

As I was struggling to find an understanding of being Mexican and growing up in the United States, I was also repressing another internal conflict. I started dating boys in middle school and I wasn't particularly excited but I liked them. I had boyfriends, and I had crushes but it was mostly superficial. It wasn't until I joined my school's soccer team and I met this girl, who was so different from the others. She was quiet, reserved and shy, but when you got to know her, she was probably the funniest person in

the room. We became so close, she was my best friend. Then I started to question myself, I was confused. I did not just want to be her friend, I had never felt this before, but I wanted to be her girlfriend. I wanted to hold her and never let go. When I realized this, I cried every night for months. I knew that my life would be so much harder if I was queer, and there I was again being different. Even though I wore makeup like the other girls, I like dressing up, I like being feminine like most girls, I will always be different. In 2015, the United States allowed gay marriage in all 50 states, and though this was a controversial topic, being gay was finally okay. Except it really wasn't, my Mexican culture made fun of homosexuals and my catholic side turned their backs on them. Once my mother started suspecting I could possibly be a lesbian, she asked me if I wanted to be a man. I then thought back to the lesson my mom had taught me years ago, to repress my identity, as it could be dangerous to be myself. Therefore at home, I liked boys and had a "boyfriend", at school I was "American" and had a girlfriend. I was never really allowed to be myself. I had to hide every aspect of my identity to feel safe, I wasn't allowed to be gay and I wasn't allowed to be undocumented.

My journey towards acceptance began, I started looking for support at organizations that fought to defend my rights. Sadly, my school had no resources, therefore I became my own resource. I started The Latino Student Union at my school where I focused on making a safe space for Latinx people and was intentional to cater to undocumented people. I then reached out to non-profit organizations outside of school, I joined the Kansas Missouri Dream Alliance and volunteered at the American Civil Liberties Union. I was then exposed to so many different people, just like me. I met queer folks, I met undocumented people, I met refugees, transgender people. I was finally in a safe space where I could be my authentic self, I was accepted and respected by everyone. I was able to be openly queer and undocumented. For the first time in my life I no longer lived in fear, I felt empowered to be every bit of myself. My intersectionality was not a curse, I was different because I was made to be different. My stories, my experiences were not unique people had gone through them before. People experienced harassment, discrimination, bullying, racial profiling just for looking or acting a certain way, just like me. I met people who also had to repress their identities to feel safe at home or in public, I understood their pain, and that is why I started sharing my story. I started advocating for women, for immigrants, for queer rights, for any community that experienced marginalization.

By participating in organizations that helped marginalized communities I was able to uplift people who were once in my shoes, I was able to come out proudly as undocumented. My voice came in, I was able to speak of issues inside of my community. I was no longer fighting these issues on my own, I was able to fight them as a group with people who were just like me or sympathized with my story. We never let anyone push us back into fear, we felt empowered to fight for our rights. We as people are different, and though our journey towards accepting our differences can be long and hard, it must be done. We must stand together and listen, we must work to create a safe space for everyone, no matter their ethnicity, their gender, or their sexual orientation. Although coming out is hard, trust me I know, not only should we come out with our identities, but we also should come out as accepting, we should throw out our prejudices, biases, and hatred.

When I came out as undocumented, it was terrifying. The lesson my mom had taught me out of fear, to repress my identity because it could put me in danger rang in my head. Someone could call immigration officers and deport me, and my family. I could be ripped away from my life in the United States, but I knew that if my story could at least touch one person, and inform them of the fear and the need that comes with improved immigration laws, it was worth it. I will always advocate my community, even if it is dangerous because if we don't who will? Similarly, coming out as a lesbian was also terrifying. I knew people would look at me differently, I knew that accepting my sexuality would make my life a lot harder than it had to be, but I could no longer repress my emotions. Even if my family did not understand at first, I knew that nothing about me was different, I was still the same person except I was happier because I could finally be myself. Being different is never a bad thing, what is a bad thing is not ever having the courage to be yourself. Now I understand, not everyone has a safe space to do so,

which is why I continue to fight for human rights. I will not back down against injustice and hope to fight for all rights, in the justice system one day. I urge everyone to come out as a human and throw out their hatred towards being different because it is so damaging to people. We must stand together to accept each other and encourage differences, and embrace our own.

## Insecurity

Liliana Rodrigue

“You look beautiful”  
My heart doesn’t think it’s true  
“Don’t worry about what other people think of you”  
I can’t because they made me create this insecurity

Reminiscing these tortures  
Almost made me give up my existence  
All these comments turn my days into scorchers  
I don’t seek their forgiveness

**Big Nose**  
**Cricket Nose**  
**Ugly Nose**

Those phrases trigger my insecurity to explode  
I felt the pain of hearing those shots of words  
Each day I try to reload  
But the bullying starts to burn

Elementary was hell  
No one tried to stop it  
Their harshness trapped me in a cell  
My heart was this close to lit

Teenager era began  
Year after year more procedures came in  
I wanted to stick to this plan  
I guess I can call it a win?

Now I am done  
Improvements are coming along  
I can’t let these comments make me run  
Those people are wrong  
I am beautiful.  
I am a human being  
That wants to explore her own beauty and  
existence.



Photos by Yarely Castor



Photos by Angel Alvear

### Cual es el mas querido

Citlaly Mejia Isidro

Born in the land of the free  
 My parents dream *con su México querido*  
 Stuck in the middle of two worlds  
 Not knowing where to go  
 Swirling around seeking my own land hoping to  
 belong somewhere

People see and wonder  
 What I must be  
 Lost and confused  
 Thinking they don't look like me

Close or afar others imagine the worst from the  
 best

The native tongue wild and free  
 Fighting between Spanish and English  
*Hablas en español o en inglés?*, choose  
 You pick and you lose  
 We collide languages to ease the war

Our pretty brown face dictates our fate  
 Which side will you take?  
 Eagles or snakes  
*Lindo y bonito cual es el más querido*



## My Autoethnography

Manju Regmi

In this project, my goal is to connect my experience with the theory of autoethnography, and immigrant students in the United States. As an immigrant woman living in the United States for almost twelve years, I can connect to what autoethnography authors write in their texts. I can connect with the characters in those texts, through my memories and experiences creating a truthful and interesting project. Even though it is difficult to remember all the facts and the important aspects of my journey after many years. I decided to choose this topic because I want to share my experience with other immigrants to challenge other immigrants and encourage them to tell their stories so they can write about their arrivals, adjustments, adaptations to new environments. Everyone has their own stories because no two immigrants share the same story.

Autoethnography, describe their own lives in a certain group or community. In immigrant writings, authors share their life stories as they describe the journey to new environments, cultures, languages, and customs. Both writings correspond, people, acknowledge people's lives, and remind them of their past stories with ongoing experiences.

Everyone has a unique experience and a hidden story to tell. Before I proceeded with the actual writing, I thought that there was nothing easier than writing about myself. I was born into a world of bamboo huts, food rations, and dirt roads. My family was in Beldangi One, a refugee camp in Nepal. Before coming to Nepal my family used to live in Bhutan. Compelled to leave Bhutan and living in the confines of Nepal's camps. There were few jobs, no expectations of a better life, poor opportunities for the school. luckily they were helped by the UN refugee agency (UNHCR). All the Bhutanese lived in the camp for decades until they had the opportunity to immigrate to different places such as the United States, Canada, Australia, Europe.

I am reviewing my transition from my original home in Nepal to my new home in the United States. The transition to a different place was very difficult but no one will forget how moving to a different place got them a new life and a better future. My goal in this autoethnography is to describe and compare my life in the two countries: Nepal and the United States. I just want to offer my perspective, my feelings, and thoughts that are an outcome of this change in my life.

I arrived at the international airport in Oakland, California with my family in 2008. My father had only one-hundred-dollar of America at that time. Everything was new to me that I was so lost, confused don't know anything. People are looking different, hearing different languages from people. It feels so new. Arriving at the new apartment feels new from the electrical switches to the toilet is different from Nepal. Foods taste different here, I feel that in Nepal food taste more organic that the flavor is there but here there is nothing natural but artificial. It feels different even today in here especially on cultural holidays because the community is so small and it doesn't bring the taste we have in Nepal so we miss that a lot but we still celebrate with fully hearted.

The stories of America being the "Land of Opportunity" is believable because anyone can achieve anything with their hard work and dedication. There are so many opportunities and that's why immigrants come to the United States in hopes of finding a better future for their family. Same as that my family and I immigrated to the United States because life was unsure and we had no future in a small bamboo hut in the refugee camp (Nepal) where we spent our life over a decade. There were no opportunities for anything, let education alone. The education system in Nepal is very low. There were no education opportunities for refugees because of the economic perspective of your family but for the rich family it is accessible. However, coming to the United States changed

everything. Education in the United States is given to anybody and everyone has a right to it but you have to know how to utilize that accurately. If a student wants to be successful then he or she can work very hard to achieve their goals. The problem here in America is that not all the students understand the value of education because it comes to them very easily but for a refugee children's education is hard to get and they are not accessing it easily that's why they understand the value of an education. It changed for the better. I started to go to school, it was very difficult for me because English is not my native language and I didn't even know how to communicate fluently in English.

When I was little, my parents and grandparents constantly reminded me that school is essential but what's more important is what you will do with that education so you have to take care of that as well. Even now they still say the school is important because it opens up opportunities for you. I feel they always say this because they never got the opportunity to study or complete their studies because of their situation at that time.

As of now, I feel blessed because I am where I can do something in life. I hope others to see and appreciate the hard lives of immigrants, and our desire to live the American dream. Life is hard but we have to work hard to get what we want it and don't lose the opportunity when you are getting it.



Photo by Yarely Castor

## Dreams Killer

Yailyn Flores

Excerpted From	Extraído de
Dreams killer	Asesino de sueños
<p>Character: Yailyn (female), nineteen to twenty years. An undocumented student who came to the US at the age of 15 years old with dreams and goals to accomplish. She was born in Mexico and raised by her grandparents. She is currently now in the US living with her parents, sister and brother. She has a chronic problem in her lower back that impedes her play sports or exercise.</p> <p>Yailyn: Immigration system, I am mad at you because it's your fault that I am not fully happy. Because of you, I can't visit my family in Mexico. My poor grandparents are alone because their son can't be with them. Their grandchildren can't be with them. My dad is sad because he misses his parents and I'm mad because I can only see them through the screen of my phone. I can't hug them or kiss them. They're getting sick and I can't take care of them. I'm scared that I won't be with them in their last moments. I'm mad at you because I can't even see my boyfriend. You took his tourist visa away, just because you thought he was coming to work when he was just coming to see me! I can't go to Mexico. I don't know when I will be able to see him again! Now we have to have a long-distance relationship. Can you imagine how hard that is? No, you don't because you don't think about the families you separate and you don't know how they feel for being apart.</p> <p>And you know what? I'm not only mad at you. I am mad at my parents for bringing me to the US when I was 15 years old. When I already had a life in Mexico. I had my friends and my family. I was forced to start a new life. I was forced to learn a new language and go through bullying for my mispronouncing words. I had to be the parent because they couldn't communicate in English. I had to take responsibilities that were not mine and that gave me extra stress. I had to be the translator, while I was worried about grades and going through bullying. I was not like other girls that have their parents helping them with their homework. I was the girl who had to be mature enough to do my work and also help my parents. I</p>	<p>Personaje: Yailyn (femenino), diecinueve a veinte años.</p> <p>Una estudiante indocumentada que llegó a los Estados Unidos a la edad de 15 años con sueños y metas que cumplir. Ella nació en México y fue criada por sus abuelos. Actualmente, ella está viviendo en los Estados Unidos con sus padres, su hermana y su hermano. Ella tiene un problema crónico en su espalda baja que le impide jugar deportes y hacer ejercicio.</p> <p>Yailyn: Sistema de inmigración, estoy enojada contigo porque por tu culpa no soy completamente feliz. Por tu culpa, no puedo visitar a mi familia en México. Mis pobres abuelos están solos porque su hijo no puede estar con ellos. Sus nietos no pueden estar con ellos. Mi papá está triste porque extraña a sus padres y yo estoy enojada porque sólo puedo verlos a través de la pantalla de mi celular. No puedo darles un abrazo o un beso. Ellos están enfermos y no puedo cuidarlos. Tengo miedo de que no pueda estar con ellos en sus últimos momentos. Estoy enojada contigo porque ni siquiera puedo ver a mi novio. Le quitaste su visa de turista, sólo porque pensaste que él venía a trabajar cuando en realidad ¡sólo venía a verme! No puedo ir a México. ¡No sé cuándo pueda verlo de nuevo! Ahora debemos tener una relación a distancia. ¿Puedes imaginar qué tan difícil es eso? No, porque no piensas en las familias que separas y no tienes idea de cómo se sienten al estar lejos.</p> <p>¿Y sabes qué? No sólo estoy enojada contigo. Estoy enojada con mis padres por traerme a los Estados Unidos cuando tenía 15 años. Cuando ya tenía una vida en México. Tenía a mis amigos y a mi familia. Me obligaron a empezar una nueva vida. Me obligaron a aprender un nuevo idioma y a sufrir burlas debido a mi mala pronunciación. Tuve que asumir el rol de mis padres porque ellos no podían comunicarse en inglés. Tuve que asumir responsabilidades que no eran mías y eso me estresaba. Tuve que ser la traductora</p>

became the "other" so I began to underestimate myself. I became a different person... I'm mad because I don't know what to do with my life. I hate you so much! I miss my grandparents so much. I used to stay over every weekend with them and I could not go to sleep unless I was holding my grandmother's hand. I miss her smell. The warmth of her body. How she used to tell me she loves me. I miss my grandpa that always took care of me. Every single time I was sick. It didn't matter if it was the middle of the night, he would always get out of bed and make me tea to feel better. He would stay with me until I fell asleep. He would always take me to the store in the neighborhood and buy me what I wanted. I miss to hear the sound of him just randomly singing. I miss laughing with them. Being happy with them. I feel powerless, impotent. They're the people who I love the most. I want to return them everything that they have done for me and it is just not fair not being able to. I'm stuck here. Where do I go from here?

I hate you so much. I'm mad because you're stopping me from everything. I wanted to be a successful person. Now I am scared of what's going to happen when I finish my associates. What will I do if they ask for my social security number again? Or even if they don't? How am I going to pay for it? if I can't even apply for any scholarships. I am mad because I can't even go to the doctor when I'm sick. Because I have no insurance and the bills are extremely high. I suffer from low back pain and I am mad because every time I get hurt I have to wait for the pain to go away by itself, instead of having a doctor helping me. I am mad because of you I went through depression and I didn't want to live anymore. I hate you so much. I don't even like to be here, but I can't go back. My life is nowhere now.

mientras estaba preocupada por mis calificaciones y lidiar con el *bullying*. No era como las otras chicas que sus padres las ayudaban con sus tareas. Era la chica que tenía que ser lo suficientemente madura para hacer mi tarea y también ayudar a mis padres. Me convertí en la "rara", entonces comencé a subestimarme. Me convertí en una persona diferente... Estoy enojada porque no sé qué hacer con mi vida. ¡Te odio mucho! Extraño demasiado a mis abuelos. Solía pasar cada fin de semana con ellos y no podía dormir a menos que mi abuela me tomara de la mano. Extraño su olor. El calor de su cuerpo. Cómo ella solía decirme que me ama. Extraño a mi abuelo que siempre cuidaba de mí. Cada vez que yo me enfermaba. No importaba si era a mitad de la noche, él siempre se levantaba de la cama y me preparaba té para sentirme mejor. Él se quedaba conmigo hasta que me quedaba dormida. Él siempre me llevaba a la tienda de la esquina y me compraba lo que yo quería. Extraño escuchar cómo de la nada comenzaba a cantar. Extraño reírme con ellos. Ser feliz con ellos. Me siento con las manos amarradas, impotente. Ellos son las personas que más amo. Quiero devolverles todo lo que ellos han hecho por mí y no es justo no poder hacerlo. Estoy atrapada aquí. ¿Qué es lo que haré después de aquí?

Te odio con todo mi corazón. Estoy enojada porque me estás impidiendo de todo. Quería ser una persona exitosa. Ahora tengo miedo de lo que vaya a pasar cuando termine mis *associates*. ¿Qué haré si me piden mi número de seguro social otra vez? ¿O incluso si no lo hacen? ¿Cómo voy a pagar por él? Si ni siquiera puedo aplicar para una beca escolar. Estoy enojada porque ni siquiera puedo ir al doctor cuando estoy enferma. Porque no tengo seguro médico y las facturas son demasiado caras. Sufro de lumbalgia y estoy enojada porque cada vez que me lastimo tengo que esperar a que el dolor desaparezca por sí solo, en lugar de ir con un doctor a tratarme. Estoy enojada porque por tu culpa sufrí de depresión y ya no quería vivir más. Te odio demasiado. Ni siquiera me gusta estar aquí, pero no puedo regresar. Mi vida está en ninguna parte ahora.



## The Spiral Que Comenzó Todo.

### *A Monologue*

Jaretsy Cruz Castañeda

The Spiral Que Comenzó Todo I am sure everyone at least once in their life has side-eyed someone with such passion that it physically hurt. Right? Porque I know I am not the only one. Giving someone the “what in your right mind made you say that” glaring eyes with the mugging face is normal y también right para la salud. A particular moment might’ve just popped into your mind as well as the rush of emotions that took place during said moment. That is exactly how I’m feeling as I reminisce back to around this time two years ago, December 2017 to be exact, as I was a junior in high school and getting ready to pack my bag and exit seventh hour. I was excited to get home y comer una torta or maybe make myself some huevos con jamon or a lo mejor take it back to the good old arroz con frijoles; the possibilities were endless. My stomach started to make that growling sound with all these food thoughts y yo sé que ustedes saben de lo que me estoy refiriendo. Pero my food consumed thoughts were quickly interrupted by Mr. Jennens, my government teacher, and let me just say, he was a good one at that since I have not been actively interested in government and economics since his class. Bless his soul.

He began to introduce our final project of the semester, much like the one I’m currently presenting. We had to choose a country and research how its government works. Easy, I thought. Now my mind was consumed with new ideas, I was thinking maybe Cuba, France or España; something not too familiar. I wrote my top three choices down and patiently waited for the randomizer to butcher my name, in typical fashion. While I was waiting también estaba escuchando and a fellow student decided to escoger Mexico as his country of choice. In my head, I facepalmed myself because why didn’t I think of choosing my home country. I don’t know much of it to begin with and this project would have been un buen lugar para comenzar. La verdad is that it just slipped mi mente, at least that’s what I told myself at the time. My thoughts were once again interrupted pero esta vez fue diferente.

When el maestro was moving on to the next student, I overheard the comment, “Of course, he would pick Mexico. I mean look at him” followed by laughter. Ustedes no me conocen but when I tell you my daggered pierced eyes and mugging face was the strongest it had ever been. I turned around with a quickness but was only met with blank stares. It was as if it never happened pero sé lo que escuché. Honestly, I was surprised at myself for even doing that. I am not the confrontational type. I do not know what I would’ve done or how I would’ve reacted if someone repeated it back to my face. What was corriendo through mi cabeza was mi mamá. How she always told me que es mejor to mind your business and keep looking forward o que nunca dejes que alguien tenga o piense que tiene control sobre ti. I just couldn’t let this go. I was curious. I wanted to entender what would make someone say something like that. Si, the student that chose Mexico also happened to be Hispanic, pero we didn’t know if he was Mexican. He could’ve been Cubano, Puerto Rican, or from anywhere else in the world. Yet, they just assumed he was from Mexico. Why did they say it? Why was it a laughing matter at that?

I was spiraling! My emotions and thoughts were all over the place. I even explain what happened to my friend on the bus and she agreed it was messed up. I knew I wasn’t being a dramatica for no reason. Pero when I got home, I started thinking again; as you can see, it’s a skill I am very good at. That’s when the questions came.

Why was I so angry at a comment that was not directed towards me? Am I overreacting? What if I had picked Mexico; would they have said the same thing? No, because it was probably an inside joke between friends. That still does not sit well with me, joke or not. I am probably just overreacting. Am I though? What if he was from Mexico and just did not want to say anything. What if his parents told him it was better to keep quiet? I mean you never know who could be listening. Still, he's still a person who just happened to be born in another country, big deal. Or maybe he's embarrassed? That must be it! No, because it's a normal thing since technically almost everyone in the United States comes from somewhere else. I'm running out of questions to ask myself about someone I don't even know. Me faltó una: What if I am him?

Ahora esperame. Que estoy diciendo? Claro que no! No, no, no, and no infinite amount of times. I mean yes, I was not born in the United States. Pero I'm not ashamed of where I come from. I actually take pride of where I was born, Acapulco, Guerrero if you were curious, at least the six years of it I remember.

I miss it. Yo extraño the ocean and my family and my childhood. I know I shouldn't probably say that. Verdad? Don't get me wrong, Missouri is my home. I started school here. I met my close friends here. I got my first pet here. I became a big sister for la segunda vez here. I gained a fear of squirrels here. I met a boy here. I graduated high school. Y ahora here I am, in college, about to finish my first semester. I built my life here. Nobody can take that away from me. Una parte de mi extraña the 'what could've been'. I ask myself that question more than I should. Luego escucho y leo las noticias and am grateful I 'made it'. I made it. It has an uncomfortable ring to me. I can't put my finger on it, but it feels like I haven't made it.

*And see part of me  
Who rejects my father and my mother  
And dissolves into the melting pot  
To disappear in shame.*

Yes, I have opportunities that I know for a fact I would not have if the 'what could've been' was my reality. I am aware of how lucky I am. Pero aveces I can't help but be...angry...frustrated. Both words sound like I am ungrateful. Lo se pero escuchame; I mean, I guess you don't really have a choice. It would be nice if I could visit mi abuela. If I could go to the hospital and not be afraid of the possibility of not going home. If a traffic stop wouldn't make my future flash before my eyes. If I could apply to any college or scholarships and not have to search for 'citizen' in the requirements. If I could get a degree and be able to have a regular career. Hay muchas cosas that could be better. However, I am one of the lucky ones.

Is this how Rodolfo Corky Gonzales felt when he pushed for equal rights? Was the Chicano movement based on frustration and agradecimiento? Was it the want for change? Is that why "I Am Joaquín" became a voice for most? Whatever the razón might be, it needed to happen. I might not be born in the United States but yo en tiempos me senti como que no pertenecía. No soy de aqui, asi que no soy Americana pero tambien no deberia de extranar mi pais if I ever want to 'belong'.

*I look the same  
I feel the same  
I cry  
And  
Sing the same.*

Tengo dos culturas en mi corazón and nobody can take that away from me.

Just like nobody can take my 'Latina card' away. Yes, I am looking at you Tia. I know I am not the most fluent in Spanish as I could be pero al menos puedo comunicarme con usted. Yo se que frustrating it can be. Imagine how I feel when I don't get the joke or nod as I try to comprehend but ultimately fail in confusion; that's what happens when you know two languages. Words come and go and get mixed up all the time. Pero I am proud to be bilingual. I get to represent where I come from and where I was raised. I get to communicate and understand from two different perspectives, although not perfectly every time. It made reading "I Am Joaquin" that much easier. It made it more special. Meanings and symbolism cannot be translated; neither can your culture or the emotions that most advise to leave behind.

*All my history,  
Stifled all my pride,  
In a country that has placed a  
Different weight of indignity upon my age-old burdened back.*

Language is a beautiful way to connect. Pero el sentimiento atras de las palabras también es importante. It would have been much easier to conform instead of to adapt. I would have gotten less stares when speaking Spanish. Let me just say being an eight-year-old and having to take in all the little stares and comments made when I translated was not fun. It was a lot. Don't get me wrong, I love to help. I would do anything for mis padres. I would be lying if I said it didn't get to me at times and my young mind would place the blame on my parents. Every kid just wants to be normal. Pero being agradecida is an understatement. I would not be who I am today if it wasn't for them and their decisions, and I know most can relate. Mis padres never let me lose touch con mis raíces. My culture is a part of my self-identity. Like Corky Gonzales expresses, it is important for someone to know where they come from to open la mente y el corazon para entender por qué eres como tú eres. Esto es lo que quiero que un día mis hermanos entiendan.

Ser Hispano in an environment donde tu cultura is not celebrated is isolating. Especialmente if you were not born here. I am not talking about close family members or friends. Me estoy refiriendo to the growing amount that look down upon us. I caught the beginning of this 'new wave' at the end of my adolescencia.

*I look at myself  
I watch my brothers.  
I shed tears of sorrow. I sow seeds of hate.*

I was already in the graduating mindset and nothing could stop me. I already tenia la seguridad of having an idea of who I was. I wasn't there completamente, pero it was the start of my journey. The state of the country I call home pushed me. I still don't know in what direction exactly. Pero estoy aquí verdad. Claro que va a ver obstacles y dificultades along the way. Es el precio que pagamos for not having the luxury of being born in the United States. Ahora that I know some of the obstacles, I can help along the way. Starting freshman year of high school, complete at least half of your community service so you won't be too stressed come senior year. Recuerda que it has to be somewhere donde they do not require a SSN. Comienza a aprender a manejar; it's a good skill to have as a precaution, even if we won't be able to get a permit or a driver's license. Start studying for the ACT porque it will create your future. The higher the score, the lower tuition will be. Speaking of tuition, apply for as many small scholarships as you can. Nada es muy poquito. Make sure to check the requirements for both scholarships and college applications porque you might have to apply as an 'international student' since you weren't born here. Any FASFA letters you get, ignore them porque no calificamos. Hay muchos consejos que te voy a dar. Para empezar, graduation is a must. Ya se que it's going to get overwhelming and frustrating porque it feels like it's all para nada pero take it from me, it is worth it. You made it this far, and I'm proud of you.

No sé si lo mencioné antes pero I am about to end my first semester of college. It might not be a big deal to most, but my goal of a higher education was out of the picture hace 5 meses. I am proud. That's not something I say very often but I am today. I am proud to be Mexican. I am proud to be bilingual. I am proud and grateful to have been raised here. I am proud to be una hija y una hermana. I am proud of my family. I am proud of Rodolfo Corky Gonzales and the Chicano movement. I am proud I graduated high school. I am proud I get to continue my education. I am proud to be where I am. I am proud of where I am from. Más importante, I am oddly agradecida for the comment made in seventh hour government class hace dos años. Sin el principio no tendría la oportunidad de decir mi verdad. Your truth is who you are.

*We face life together in sorrow,  
anger, joy, faith and wishful  
thoughts.*

### Pumpkins

Yailyn Flores





## Bonus Essay

### "Chapter 11." Trespassing Across America.

#### *Literary Analysis*

Jose Perez

In the novel *Trespassing Across America*, written by Ken Ilgunas, Ilgunas is determined to walk across the path of the XL Keystone Pipeline across the country to try to spread awareness of the catastrophic effects it could have on the environment. He finds himself walking all throughout most of his journey. He describes this simplistic action of walking as a form of art and a surreal experience in a therapeutic sense. Specifically in chapter 11, "The Electrician", Ilgunas goes off on a tangent about the benefits of walking and how it makes him feel free. A key emphasis being the different ways his journey has shaped him into the person he is and the repeating theme of traveling alone.

Ilgunas communicates the beauty of walking, the most basic way of getting around, as he travels through South Dakota. He presents the reader with the question: "Is there anything more rhythmic than the motion of walking?" (147). He presents this hypothetical in a sense that walking requires minimum thought yet a complex process is executed with every motion in the body. It is exclusive to humans as we are the only animals that only rely on two legs for walking. In a way, this activity is humanizing and is well needed in order to keep him grounded while still providing a release from his reality. It is his way of relaxing and leaving the past behind, both literally and figuratively. He came up with the idea to travel the pipeline while he was working at an oil work camp. He was not happy with his current state and decided he had nothing to lose. He portrays his life in this manner. The metaphor of walking is used to show the conflicts he had been through in which lead him to start his journey. He has reached the perfect balance of walking long enough to where he is now used to it but not long enough to the point in which he is exhausted from it. This blend is reflected in his life from which he explains he had been through many struggles in his past early on, however, there is a sense of joyfulness continent he feels now with an underlying feeling of knowing this happiness is temporary. Yet this does not bother him as he enjoys the moment for what it is. He admires the confidence it brings him, being able to put one foot over the other to launch his entire body forward to continue on his journey. He also has a sense of pride for walking long distances, feeling healthy and in-shape that comes from that amount of walking he does daily. With this simple form of transportation he is able to travel across the whole country and make a huge impact.

With the little amount of thought process that is needed to walk, it allows Ilgunas to think about his experiences and reflect upon them. Ilgunas exhibit self-growth mentally as he walks. His journey has taught him how to adapt to the appropriate situations because he has no one to depend on other than himself. He states: "When you travel alone, you have no choice but to play *all* of the roles. You have to be the whole team" (150). What he means by this is that he is his own navigator, tent preparer, and caretaker. He must learn how to do everything alone because he has no one else to help him. He mentions how things might've been different had he taken a companion with him on his travels. He'd have someone to share the experience with and provide general and moral support in his times of need. This would cause much more of a hassle however as much of the novel he travels at his own pace. In traveling alone, he is more self-reliant and independent. This has also caused an increase in his confidence in handling issues. We get to see these different "masks" he uses when interacting with locals as

well. Since his whole journey is based on his beliefs for the environmental issues the pipeline would cause, he is usually reserved and more cautious when speaking to someone about his political views that does not share the same set of ideas to avoid any hostility in the form of passionate individuals, suppressing his true identity. Ilgunas has a hard time accomplishing this on his own, so having someone else there that has similar views as him could jeopardize political discourse with locals of the area, leading to further conflict.

Ilgunas talks about being in autopilot as he continues on his journey. He reminisced on past events that took place in his life. He compares this thought process as a form of dreaming when he says: "Walking across the plains is sort of like walking in a dream. Once you've entered into a state of peace and quiet ... the subconscious comes to the surface and shows itself to you." (152). However, this leads to him revisiting some of his most negative memories as well. From all the horrible, sad, and embarrassing memories he has had. One of these being when his family put to sleep his childhood dog which lead to the thought that one his father will also pass away. These thoughts are overshadowed later with a whole different mood. He then thinks about his sexual tendencies and the thought of meeting a woman for him in the next town on his path. This gives him hope and motivation. His mind trails off to varying different moods to compensate for the bland, basic reality of walking. He yearns for the presence of someone to converse with. His loneliness forces him to think of others in his life and the others he has the possibility of meeting in the future. His initial despair quickly transitions into desire to keep going.

Not only is the basic practical use of walking a key component in Ilgunas' journey in the novel, but also the idea of how walking alone can impact your mental and physical self. He proves to himself that he is capable of achieving his goals with self-reliance. Ilgunas himself expresses his love for walking and what it means to him. The excess time he has to walk leads him to self-discovery and improvement. Something as simple as walking could lead to much greater things.



Photo courtesy of Donnelly College

# Thank You

dime would like to thank every student who submitted work to this year's issue. This publication exists because of your dedication and creativity.

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Macaws in San Antonio, Costa Rica. Photo by Paula CS