

They Call Me Wetback
By Carmen Iveth Pérez Noyola



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They call me wetback, criminal, spic, rapist, drug dealer, a big mistake.

I didn't speak English until I moved here at the age of 13.
Ashamed of my accent I developed an inferiority complex which later convinced me that I was shy.

But hell, I'm breathing, my brain's awake, my heart is pumping blood through my veins;
So I'll speak up for those who can't, for those whose voice is being hushed, and to those who I'm too late for I say, forgive me.

I won't second guess myself ever again for speaking my mother tongue in public.
If Spanglish makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand, too bad!
I'm tired of saying sorry, of being overly humble. Hopefully you can keep up for many times on my words I still stumble.

I may tremble from time to time but I won't crumble, no, for I'm a dreamer, proud, immigrant and brown;
Head in the clouds with my feet rooted in this my house.

As I stand in the courtroom with my right hand up flashbacks from my childhood flood my mind.
Bittersweet tears that I can barely contain as I repeat the oath that will officially welcome me into the land of the free and the home of the brave.

I choked up at the words "with liberty and justice for"...wait!

Another unarmed man shot dead by police.
His only crime, being in the wrong place at the wrong time in the wrong skin.
The consequence? A free pass for his killer, aka administrative leave.

Another immigrant dead at the detention center after hours of screaming for help.
They dare call my father and brother "bad hombres", but the real enemies don't run from the migra;
They are domestic, they receive pardons and live in the White House.

A teenage boy whose life depends on whether he migrates or stays.
Organized crime wants him to join. They'll put a bullet in his head if he looks the other way.
The rival gang or cops will shoot him if he gives in, but if he leaves no one will shoot him then.

Too many empty seats before the judge. Those who belong in them are left behind fighting against the foot that's pressing on their neck.
Whether or not I came here the right way you don't care to find out anymore, and asking "are you, like, an illegal?" doesn't count.

I have two nations in my heart and don't tell me that I cannot;
The pain from manual labor on my parents' back fed me the crops that grew in this land with drops of sweat, love and sacrifice.

They call me wetback, terrorist, spic, better learn my name mate, it's Carmen Iveth.