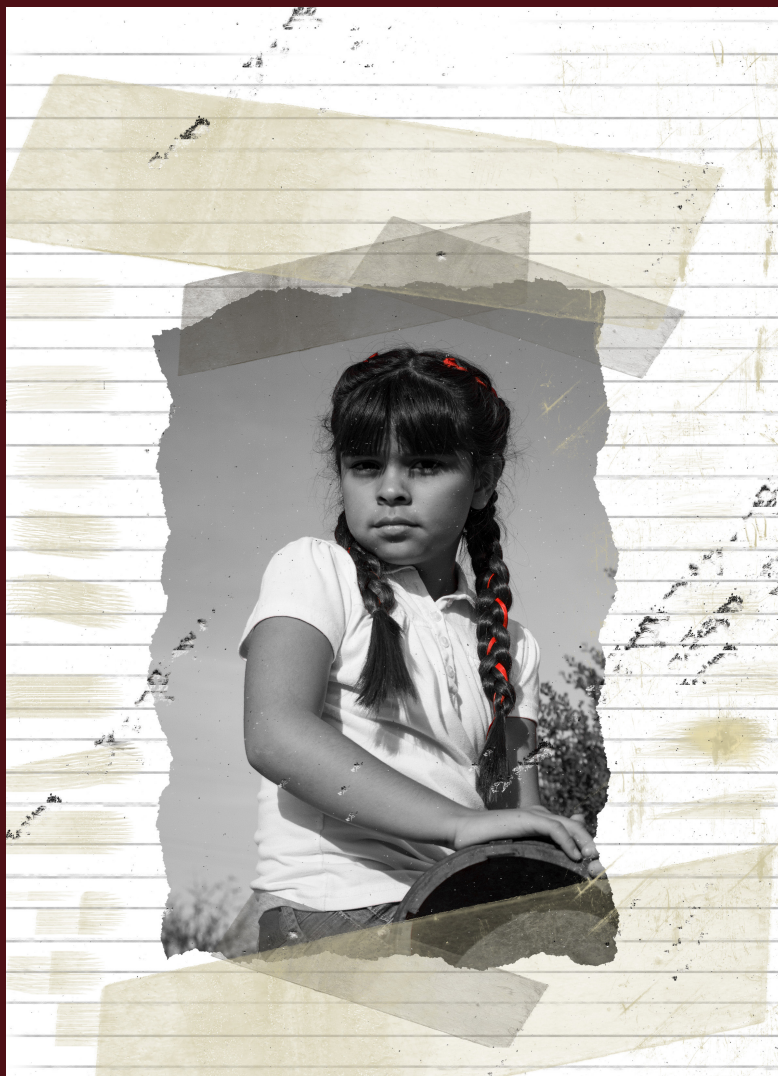


Pocha Theory



july fourth

america's suicide note
will be written in quotes
in the spaces between streetlights
millions of stars and stripes and rape and rope

lasso confessions together the shape of pursed lips
deny the creator into cosmic accident
vast knowledge, no wisdom this place

waits for generations to gather
ancestral truth
in their hard bones
in the corner of their sleep
a need for vengeance
a power to raise the dead

from the groans of the ground
not song but struggle unearths
a stiff neck trembles
split the dirt fall under
trees break off at the knots

in the backs of the children of the
founding fathers die
the sky a new blue
tint the hands of those who've had to
hold each other to
live

live I tell you
at all costs.

When we got to 45

I want to hug someone brown like me.
Someone gay like me.
Someone brave and insane like me.

I want to dig deep into my childhood
and drown in the blue calm that lies there—
a virgin to the fire outside.

I want to be stupid
and ivory and rich and expensive.

I want to climb onto the backs of my brothers,
scream till my teeth fall off.

I want to wrap myself
in the curly hair of my mother
and cry for 1,460 days.

I want to touch the belly of this country,
wake up to an America with no makeup on.

I want her to chant fake freedom
like she's always done.

I want her to say grace,
and then
when she turns to curse me under a white hood,

I want her to say it to my face.

#MeToo

The hood's *been* dense with pain but
I was a smile in a chorus of screams.
Deaf to the danger in living
and too small to see
corpses of the women I'd be—
stacked and blue
behind the stunted fence
of my childhood.

That first time,
I stared at nothing.
Hoping to go blind
to be left alone
in the dark while
suns drowned in the sky.

There the world folded over
on the empty dirt lot
of those dusty, pink apartments.

I joined the song of wails
but I've never,
not once,
let myself cry.

Spanglish

The world didn't sound like my home
where I teathed against hard Rs and sharp Os.
I met everything by its name once
and ate from my mother's voice.

At school,
those sounds became secrets and I mute.
I guess that's how history gets shushed—
always an ivory finger over the lips of a child.

There is something that happens
when your tongue gets ripped out...
your face learns to speak.

I scrunched my nose and rolled my eyes into syllables
while chewing English words
that were so cold they made my teeth hurt

but brown people reincarnate
through the throat
and my voice was never just my own
so the stubborn prophesies of my before
assorted themselves
between the consonants of the conqueror
and my mouth became the frontline of a sonic war;

the battle cries escape my lips
a *tsk* a sigh a cry a scream.
En la kitchen
bailamos cumbia con nikes on.

The English-Spanish dictionary sits
like a bible on the table but
we all
refuse
it's commandments.

Mexicans Are Such Hard Workers

I overhear
my porcelain teachers
clink their teeth together
like a toast in celebration of their tongues—
proud to be
so kind.

My father borrows a name
so he can work
to feed us.
I dream about what he was
before he was ILLEGAL
and wake up
with a boot print on my forehead
and broken fingers
from braiding God's hair.

I was born with nana's eyes
but this glare is not hereditary.
No, this is mine only.
It's not green, white, and red.
It's not red, white, and blue.
It's clear
like rain in a silver bucket.
It's new glass with old fingerprints.

At home,
all the men pluck their eyes out
so as not to cry
about the exhaustion,
to hide the regret in their pupils.
That we didn't need to inherit
(the regret, I mean)
that we learned.

Mexicans are such hard workers.
Mexicans are such
hard workers.
Mexicans are workers.
Mexicans work.
Mexican, work! Work, Mexican, work!

Mexicans are such hard workers.
They say it like it's an honor
to watch my father die.