

## Foreword

Welcome to **dime 11**: The Donnelly College Student Journal. This is another outstanding issue of creative and academic work, and I deeply appreciate the energy and creativity of all our students - our current Donnelly students, our former Donnelly students who keep returning to us, this edition's guest student from the University of Kansas, and our Lansing students whose voices we need to turn to more often.

I am grateful to Gracie Meade Esvang for the most extraordinary editing process, to Anthony Torres Carrillo for volunteering his time on both minor and major details involving the journal, and to Sonia Rivas for her joyful participation in all **dime 11** events.

We all hope that the essays, the poems, and the art work in this journal will invite inspiration and renewed conversations. But above all, we hope you take pleasure in every page, in every line, and in every image that **dime 11** contains.

– Paula Console-Şoican

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# Sister Mary Faith Schuster Award Winners:

## **The Importance of Mayan Mathematics**

Marco Ramirez

Academic Essay

## **Arenal**

Sarai Thao

Visual Arts

## **A Letter from a Bicultural Individual**

Anthony Torres Carrillo

Creative Nonfiction

## **Acceptance**

Aadesh Biswa

Poetry

## Table of Contents:

<b>The Importance of Mayan Mathematics</b> - Marco Ramirez.....	4
<b>Arenal</b> - Sarai Thao.....	9
<b>A Letter from a Bicultural Individual</b> - Anthony Torres Carrillo .....	10
<b>Acceptance</b> - Aadesh Biswa .....	12
<b>Conversations</b> - Aadesh Biswa & Bhavini Uppalapu .....	14
<b>Still Life</b> - Sabino Reyes .....	16
<b>Costa Rica</b> - Sarai Thao .....	16
<b>To Be Mexican Outside Your Homeland</b> - Bernardo Zuñiga Hernandez ...	21
<b>Planets</b> - Ezequiel Hernandez-Cruz .....	24
<b>Portraits</b> - Allison Rodriguez, Manju Mangar, & Helen Lalhriatpuii.....	25
<b>The American Dream and Racism</b> - Anthony Torres Carrillo.....	26

<b>Sky</b> - Aadesh Biswa .....	31
<b>I Love Me</b> - Sonia Rivas .....	32
<b>Money and Love</b> - Joshua Washington .....	32
<b>Shading</b> - Manju Mangar .....	33
<b>Western Kansas</b> - Anthony Torres Carrillo .....	34
<b>On Cuba</b> - Sayra Salais .....	35
<b>Thistle</b> - Anthony Torres Carrillo .....	38
<b>Emulate</b> - Quortez E. Brown .....	39
<b>Language and Identity</b> - Bawi Par .....	40
<b>Mexican Tree Frog</b> - Sonia Rivas .....	44
<b>Beyond the Realm of Reality</b> - Bryan Brizuela .....	45
<b>Who am I?</b> - Sonia Rivas .....	45
<b>Man of the Woods</b> - Angel Marrufo .....	48
<b>Tulips</b> - Sonia Rivas .....	49
<b>American Dream &amp; Genuine Happiness</b> - Sarai Thao .....	49
<b>Mushrooms</b> - Sarai Thao .....	53
<b>Illustration</b> - Emillyanna Her .....	54
<b>Tulips Pt. 2</b> - Sonia Rivas .....	55
<b>Butterfly</b> - Sarai Thao .....	55
<b>Afro Cuban Struggles</b> - Sayra Salais .....	56

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**Submit YOUR work**  
for the next issue of dime  
**and**

The Sister Mary Faith Schuster Awards

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

# **The Importance of Mayan Mathematics**

in the Village of Ch'ajyu', Tz'ikin Jaay, Tz'olöj Ya', Guatemala

**Marco Ramirez**

The Spanish colonization process of Guatemala in the year 1524 imposed new rules and restrictions to the Mayan society, including new teaching methods, government system, Spanish as an official language, new mathematics in the system of education, and more. Since then, the Mayan mathematics began to decline in its development. Today Guatemala is an independent country, but the negative impact that colonization had it still affecting Mayan communities today. The village Ch'ajyu' is a Mayan community where the promotion of the teaching of Mayan math could play a key role in the academic process for young students that have their first contact with mathematics courses in elementary school. One way to promote Mayan math in elementary education is teaching Mayan math as an independent course from traditional math. In this manner, Mayan math can be taught broadly and deeply in accord with the elementary education standards. Some specific benefits for students implicated in that way are: the development of mathematics skills through two kinds of mathematics, academic motivation since Mayan math is an element of students' native identity, and community engagement in the education process because Mayan math requires and allows the participation of parents and/or community members to help students in the application of Mayan math in real-life situations.

The lack of the use of Mayan math in formal education affects Mayan children negatively since they do not have enough resources to improve Mayan math skills. As well, they lose interest in exploring Mayan math. However, there are only a few primary schools where Mayan mathematics is included in the content of traditional mathematics. Although Mayan math in itself could be taught as a stand-alone course, in Ch'ajyu' Mayan mathematics is often taught only superficially as a foot-note of traditional math courses.

According to the Canadian Museum of History, "The Mayan mathematics constituted the most sophisticated mathematical system ever developed in the Americas." The Mayan counting system uses three symbols: a dot representing a value of one, a horizontal bar is equivalent to the value of five, and the shell is equal to Zero. Likewise, the writing form of the

numbers or calculation starts from bottom to top. Unlike the traditional mathematics (Hindu-Arabic) based in the decimal numeral system as follows:  $10^0 = 1$ ,  $10^1 = 10$ ,  $10^2 = 100$ ,  $10^3 = 1000$ , etc., the Mayan mathematics used the base 20 as shown:  $20^0 = 1$ ,  $20^1 = 20$ ,  $20^2 = 400$ ,  $20^3 = 8000$ , etc. (Canadian Museum of History). Moreover, Mayan mathematics is an essential element of the identity of the Mayan people since Mayan math is a part of the cultural, intellectual, and spiritual patrimony inherited from ancient Mayan civilization.

The elementary education is one of the most important stages of the professional life of students. It is also the stage where the students make their first contact with the content of mathematics. For the majority of Mayan children from Ch'ajyu' the elementary education is a critical moment because they have to learn the Spanish language while they also are trying to learn math. Learning two or more languages is not bad, the problem is that the Mayan native language is rarely used in the classes. According to the national curriculum of elementary education in Guatemala in the Mayan communities the teaching should be bilingual; however, in the classroom the predominant language is Spanish. Part of this problem is that there are not enough courses programmed in the curriculum that require an intensive use of the Mayan teaching methods that are available in the local community such as the native Mayan language and Mayan math.

Some people can argue that teaching two kinds of math at the same time can be confusing for children. It could possibly be more challenging for children who are not Mayan, but for Mayan students the situation is different because they have access to local community sources to practice and apply Mayan math in daily life. There are research results that supported the idea that learning Mayan math can facilitate the learning of Hindu-Arabic math. For example, Rafael Lara-Alecio et al., argue that "The algorithm of addition in the Mayan numerical system is relatively simple. It can facilitate learning arithmetic operation and develop mathematical skills. The concrete, semi-concrete, or representational materials used by Mayans: beans, sticks or graphs with the bars, dots, and shells make the algorithm easy to understand and operate"(4). Also, Luis F. Magaña, has been a leader in the adoption of Mayan math to arithmetic teaching in elementary schools in Yucatan, Mexico. Magana mentions that students who were weak in mathematics improved their performance in the mathematics area after using elements of Mayan math. In effect, according to the national test on mathematics for elementary schools in Yucatan, Mexico in the year 2012 children who were initiated to learning mathematics alongside Mayan

math, improved their performance in the subject of mathematics (Académie des sciences, France).

The promotion of Mayan math will not only contribute to the improvement of the learning of mathematics in the village Ch'ajyu', but also will help in the promotion of the Mayan identity in the academic area. According to Lara-Alecio, et al. Mayan mathematics as an element of identity of Mayan people play a key role to improve the competence and confidence of Mayan students in the formal education (1). Also, the cultural connections of Mayan math could be used by the elementary school teacher to develop multicultural attitudes into the classroom. (4).

The Mayan students can be motivated to know the cultural history of the Mayan math as they can form part of the process of recovering, promoting and developing Mayan math in the current time. According to Jeff D. Farmer, and Robert A. Powers, teaching Mayan math makes important historical and social studies connections since students can learn aspects of both ancestral Mayan civilization and the current struggles of Mayan people for civil and human rights (71).

In the present time in Guatemala, there are only a few education centers that include some courses of Mayan math in their official curriculum. That situation has affected not only students, but also the teachers because they do not have extensive experience in Mayan math. The loss of the use of Mayan mathematics is reflected in different areas of society, for example, in the market it is common to hear the combination of Mayan number and Hindu-Arabic numbers. It is good that people know how to apply two or more numerical systems in the daily activities, the problem is that usually the Mayan people from the village Ch'ajyu' are not typically able to count even up to twenty in their native language, instead relying on the Spanish names of numbers.

For example, in my case, I did not receive any lessons about Mayan math in elementary school. I started learning addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of Mayan math from the libraries, the internet, and asking Mayan elders about Mayan measurement or exercises related to Mayan math. After my interaction with the concepts of Mayan math, I realized that I used some Mayan measurements before starting elementary school. Some personal benefits from Mayan math include motivation to learn about mathematics history, and numeric systems methods and features. Furthermore, learning the mystic concept of Mayan math allows me to develop different perspectives about the spirituality of the Mayan community. Likewise, while I am learning more about Mayan math, I realize that I can improve my skills in a different academic area than my formal process of education.

It is not that Mayan mathematics was ineffective or not an advanced science tool. According Lara-Alecio et al., There are examples of the application of Mayan math, including astronomical calculations that the ancient Mayans made for the prediction of cosmic phenomena that continue to be accurate today, the development of business and trade system in the Mesoamerica geographic territory (1). In fact, according to Magaña, “It is currently accepted that, around 600 B.C. the Mayan civilization developed for the first time the mathematical abstraction of zero” (1).

According to Isabel Hawkins, the ancestral Mayan sciences and arts not only had importance in the past, but also at present continue impacting the Mayan society. For example, there are common activities in different Mayan towns where there are currently notable relationships between mathematics, astronomy and culture. Likewise, contemporary professionals have developed academic sources to learn Mayan math. In particular, Hawkins has contributed to developing sources in how to use and apply Mayan mathematics in the classroom with students of elementary and high school. In effect, the author has worked collectively with Mayan people to develop sources for learning Mayan math. There are online tools such as videos and games available in a webpage called *Living Maya Time*. (National museum of the American Indian)

Research projects continue exploring different aspects of Mayan mathematics, meanwhile there are sources to develop intensive Mayan mathematics courses. Through the promotion of Mayan math as a formal and independent course in elementary education in Ch’ajyu’, students will be reinforced in one of the most powerful tools developed by their ancestors. In this way, through time students will be exposed to an academic environment where they have opportunities to be informed about Mayan math connections with sciences and arts such as architecture, agriculture, astronomy, and other areas where Mayan math is associated.

Today in Guatemala, there is a complicated situation in which there are many adults who use the Mayan counting system in their daily lives and activities, but in many cases, are unable to read or write. Anecdotaly, my mother is a micro-businesswoman capable of managing her own corner shop in our small town. She is also an artist, with the ability to plot out intricate designs on Mayan tapestries using hundreds of threads and her backstrap loom. Despite both of these tasks requiring extensive math skills to complete, my mother is unable to recognize the numbers on a telephone to make a call to her son. Because of this situation, many children who come from families such as mine, who in the early age do not speak Spanish and cannot read or write, would enormously benefit

from a greater focus on Mayan mathematics in school. This is especially true for the case of early elementary education in which children are learning the basic principles of arithmetic. The offering of courses in Mayan mathematics would provide an opportunity for illiterate parents to participate in the education of their children, where there currently is very little ability to participate on the part of the parents.

Courses of Mayan math mathematics can improve the parents' participation in the academic formation of children from village Ch'ajyu' since there are several sources related to Mayan measurement units that are used daily in common activities in the local community. By the same token, children are familiarized with some Mayan calculation methods and quantification processes before entering elementary school. According to Yojcom, Mayan math is connected with important community activities, such as in the case of agriculture and Mayan weaving. For example, the cultivation of corn has a connection with the mathematical management of Mayan calendars. Furthermore, Mayan weavings are designed with Mayan units of measurement. Likewise, the spiritual aspect of Mayan math is represented in the arts of corn cultivation and in the elaboration of Mayan weavings (75-128).

Mayan math is a part of the cultural, spiritual and intellectual patrimony of ancient Mayan civilization that must continue its evolution in the present and future. The teachers and students from Mayan communities must be involved in the recovery and development of Mayan math. The new generation of students must lead in the use and application of Mayan math in real life. Throughout the promotion of Mayan math as an independent course in elementary education in Mayan communities such as the village Ch'ajyu'; the Mayan mathematics will be used more intensively. Some benefits implicated in that way according to the delimitation of this research project include the development of integral mathematics skills, academic motivation for Mayan children, and the promotion of inclusion and participation of Mayan families in the process of teaching Mayan mathematics in the official system of education in village Ch'ajyu', Guatemala.

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

**Arenal**  
**Sarai Thao**



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

# **A Letter from a Bicultural Individual**

**Anthony Torres Carrillo**

7 December, 2022

To my future self, to those who identify with me, and to those who want to learn a little bit about having a hybrid identity,

“The longer you stay in the United States, the more you lose your culture.” I was sitting in geography class back in 7th grade when these words from my teacher stuck with me. The class reacted in opposition. Some wanted to challenge the startling claim, but none were convincing enough to dismiss it. This was back in the fall of 2016, lining exactly with the presidential elections with Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump.

No other period of my lifetime have I ever thought that people had an issue with my culture or ethnicity. All I knew was my ethnicity and what the culture and traditions of my ethnicity were. Did she mean that we will assimilate with the culture? The white Anglo-American culture? I never thought of losing my Mexican culture nor doubted where I truly belonged. I lived in a religious household where we only spoke Spanish and heard about what Mexico was like and I, in fact, chanted the words “Que Viva!” passionately every night on the 15th of September when the television showed a live broadcast from “El Zócalo” as if I were standing there in person. But was I ever a proud Mexican? I was born in the United States from Mexican parents. My dad was proud of his homeland and wanted me to be the same. From that, I assumed that being proud of your country is important. But which one? I was born here but my bloodline originated from Mexico.

My life revolves around being an “anchor baby”. The term is known as a slur but the meaning explains exactly what my life is. I have lived here all my life along with my parents on my side. It was not until I was 5 when I learned where we come from and why all my grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins lived far away and why only they got to take a vacation at our house.

Fast forward 6 years and I notice that I am not becoming the perfect spanish speaker that I always wanted to be. Yet I am closer to becoming 21, a milestone treated differently compared to other Americans. It is a period in my life where I can finally sponsor my parents for residency. I

hear that everything will be better for me and especially for my parents who I love. They hope one day they can go back to their homeland to see their own parents at their homes and see people they have not seen since they left. They still hold their memories from their life back in Mexico but my Mexican background and culture is erasing. Was it ever there in the first place?

In the summer of 2017, Donald Trump was 5 months into his presidency and I took a trip, all by myself, to Mexico. I really thought that my parents would be in Mexico sooner than expected, bringing me along with them, therefore I wanted to make myself comfortable in my new home. I never reflected on why I went to Mexico in the first place until now.

I arrived at dawn, at the bus station, and when I stepped outside in the new foreign desert landscape, it was like stepping into Mars. I knew this was not home and I was scared that I was not within the boundaries of the United States. That day, I felt regret for leaving my parents behind for the first time in my life but I quickly got accustomed to my parent's native land as the days progressed. I had the ability to communicate in Spanish, I looked Mexican, and I knew a little bit about the country's geography and culture. I was accompanied by my family members that I had seen at my house years prior and some I had not seen in a long time or ever. They were strangers to me. It was an amazing experience full of amazing food and friendly neighbors. But I tried to compare Mexico with the United States as much as possible as a way to cope with being homesick. I recognized the same cookie cutter homes and shopping malls. But I also tried to look out for what my parents had told me when I was younger.

In many immigrant homes, children hear their parents talk about why they immigrated to the United States in a negative way. My parents criticize their own homeland. They told me about the crime, how people are not wealthy like me, and the lack of health and sanitation. So how could I be proud of my origins when I cannot get that past me?

I do believe that I am well off compared to other immigrants in the United States. If I could describe my life in one word it would be "privileged". I am happy with having what my parents provide me that I would otherwise not have in Mexico, according to them. I am always scared of becoming less successful than my parents. I feared the saying "your parents sacrificed themselves to give you a better life and all you have done is be lazy". It is pressuring me to become someone way too

successful compared to the average american but the American Dream also works the same way. I was raised on two visions which are: to work hard to succeed and to never forget where you came from despite the challenges. This vision is what I sleep with and wake up with every morning.

I must confess, I do not know a lot about Mexico and its history, such as the Gods and soldiers. I know more about the history, people, and culture of the United States because of my education in school. Is the educational system to blame? I am in a crossroads of two cultures but only one is pulling me harder. As I age, I feel like the south door to Mexico is getting further away. Behind that door is the real Mexican culture with celebrations, the soldiers, the neighbors, the markets, the landscape and so on. The north door is open, but I am not in a rush to get in it yet. So I am left in an empty room with two doors. Do you know why the room is empty? Do people like me have our own culture?

Stay happy always,  
Anthony Torres Carrillo

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

## **Acceptance**

Aadesh Biswa

*(This is part of a larger project titled "Conversations" which brought together Aadesh Biswa and Bhavini Uppalapu for their Costa Rica project.)*

*Eyes open, snooze, eyes closed.*

*In the past, waking up in panic, reaching for the phone to make sure I was not late to one of the privileges in my rush of life.*

*School.*

*Work.*

*A typical day in the blessed U.S. of A.*

Costa Rica, while I deeply want to go, is still me hurrying up my education, for the sake of my family. But, what I find here is eternally life-changing.

*Voices rushed through my mind*

*"It is a privilege you get to even go to school. Back in my days we had to go to the jungle to get grass for our cows!"*

*"Aadesh, we messed up our life by not going to school- You must not waste your life away."*

*"You are smart, what are you doing in school for 8 hours? You need to be going to work to make a little money."*

*Tightly wound in suffocation of expectations*

The rapid flapping wings of the hummingbird I finally see resting.  
My life that once required me to squeeze out productivity at all times.  
Now stops.

I see its tiny little claws, as fragile as they may be, wrap around the rod to satisfy its hunger in confidence. This poses a scary question in my mind- what do you hunger for? I think about what I would like to do for my career, but never really what I crave! And I realize I crave to be loved. I want to love in confidence and be loved in confidence, too.

*Have I done everything I should have done?*

*Faithful to church?*

**Check.**

*Had a good influence around me?*

**Check.**

*Had 4 jobs while maintaining a really good GPA in college?*

**Check.**

*Scholarship for college so my family is not burdened?*

**Check.**

*If I have done and am doing everything required, then why am I still a disappointment in my family's eyes, and essentially my own?*

*Maybe I am not a disappointment, and I just have a problem brewed from my family's negligence to notice my academic efforts.*

I want to be loved like the green forest shields me from the sorrows of the world. Like the ocean asks no questions, but just wraps me in its arms. Like the stability of the sloths tightly embracing the trees in their deep slumber.

*I am exhausted, feeling like a human blood bag for everyone around me to feed on like mosquitoes.*

Between the palms, wild Zipline winds, clouds, rushing rivers, snakes, monkeys, hummingbirds, volcanos, mountains and fruits - I saw myself. Here, reflected, I see myself and feel seen

## **Conversations** (continued) Aadesh Biswa & Bhavini Uppalapu

### **Multitude of a Trek** - Bhavini Uppalapu

No no *no* no no!  
I don't want to watch pink flowers blossom  
and ashen dirt smeared on concrete streets.

My feet hike and hike and find  
no end  
to their soreness.

But when will chances come again where I suffer and stretch and break  
what boundaries I have set and built before me?

Yes, yes, Yes!  
I love the monkeys because of how genetically accurately close they are  
to the human ancestral genes and the beating wings of hummingbirds  
and the constant war-like scratches of a mini capybara.

I'm here  
because I am meant to be here.

Whether it's enjoyment or not, I am here because there come events in  
our life which we endure regardless of the emotional consequences  
because it takes us to the next stage in life. I hope that stage gets higher  
because my heart beats with beating wings and my hair flies with cloudy  
skies and my hands caress lotion-like textures of emerald mosses lain on  
trees, growing in constant competition with one another.

In order  
to understand our individualistic approach to life and our own way of how  
we want to live, we must test and experience the utmost pressure.

Sore muscles,  
aching mind  
and stimulated pulses  
raging through my system  
leave me  
trudging yet gripping for more  
with a spirited soar  
of attitude and belonging in nature where I trek.  
I may not leave an impression on this world and may instead  
fade away as the  
tiny speck  
that I am,  
but I live and  
I am  
living through mountains of Monteverde  
in this moment.

How I fade May or May Not be up to  
me, but what I choose is my  
responsibility  
and  
mine alone.

Like  
each star that dies on its own and gets left  
forgotten,

I too  
will leave.

No,  
I don't want to trek

but

Yes,  
I want to break every boundary.

I want this.



**Still Life**  
Sabino Reyes



**Costa Rica**  
Sarai Thao

*Conversations (continued)*

## **A Foreign Childhood - Aadesh Biswa**

How can this country  
hold my childhood?

Born  
into a Bhutanese refugee household,  
Criminal to claim Nepal  
my home country  
family surviving by tents alone

Until resettlement flew our way.  
A walk or two leads to a forest  
Food, brush, explorative ways of water  
A shelter enduring  
hardship

Through the mind's eye  
Colorless and gloomy  
Yet through a child's wonder is  
Soaring mountains, roaring rivers  
Culture with traditions

A worldly playground  
Full of life

I was full of life.  
Embraced in the beauty and warmth  
Of a country that was never mine  
Nepal

Now  
A treat and revelation  
An unplanned visit  
Allowing reminiscence to the past  
Costa Rica

My feet landed  
And I was brought to celebrations  
Music, joy, community, family and  
Love  
A memory seeping  
through the cracks

My grandparents' home  
Beloved by all  
The village  
Heavenly court for children and elderly  
to live lively

Sharp dances with hollered voices  
Found in a little Costa Rican home  
Heavenly

A buried inner child-  
Drowned by life's bills,  
responsibilities, "school discipline", perfect grades, FICO scores, jobs,  
networking,  
attempting to become another extraordinary immigrant story-  
emerged.

Now, I feel alive again.

The breath God had given me at birth,  
somehow received  
once again

Permission by  
nature,  
weather,  
culture  
of Costa Rica  
living unapologetically-  
and man  
did I  
LIVE!

No  
Not the soaring mountains  
Not the roaring rivers  
Or ankle breaking steep roads  
Not vegetated forests,  
God forsaken venomous snakes,  
Thieving monkeys  
Taste twisting fruits  
Not gham-pani gham-pani  
No

It is  
Liberty  
Given to the people to live  
A Pura Vida life

## **Mystified Introspections - Bhavini Uppalapu**

Scarlet blood wine  
dancing shadows  
reap sorrow in warped time  
worth none

Flocked macaws' screeching  
One lone without its craving of  
love satiated  
It's partner in the afterlife

What pray tell can tell  
tale signs provide  
Winding river paths scrounging  
down from depths paved deep  
by waterfalls

Can swaying palm  
branches with undertones  
of serenity provide the  
longed for deep comfort  
one prays for?

crash crashes keep  
crashing waves crash  
sounds resonate crash of crashing

Bring salt watered tears  
back to me above black  
sand  
beaches and my love for  
the Caribbean Sea on the  
other side

Swing down vines yet reach  
too far and one yellowed  
viper snatches underneath

Snatched by its vengeance  
against the disturbance of  
its serenity  
Pray tell me will you bite  
and shall i live?  
Anti-venom, anti to my well  
being, anti to what i hope, anti  
to what i say, anti to the  
dreams  
i have so hoped to follow

breathe in sorrow and  
breath out  
divinity

Divinity, divine! Divinity!  
Don't be abashed by singed  
scales scalded deep yet  
imprinted  
smooth on iguanas  
Does one know its ancestors,  
so still and ready to hiss and  
attack while protecting what it  
so instinctively claims its own territory?

Shame through dripped sweat A  
labor unbound from within  
Continues curing broken down trust  
and widens boundaries until all are  
broken

Keep going  
Wrap around your mind not  
around objects nor time but  
around the extreme moonlight  
which shown its light to  
illuminate skin under the  
abyss of the dark by the  
echoes of buzzing cicadas

Wrap  
Walk  
Winged sharp  
Stay brave  
Brace bravery, brace!  
Stay Brave  
Push!  
Stay  
Stay brave~

## **To Be Mexican Outside Your Homeland**

Bernardo Zuñiga Hernandez

Would you be shocked to find out that a Mexican is more than the typical stereotype you might believe we are associated to. Would you be surprised that we are more than the typical construction worker, the gardener, the farmer, a field worker, the rancher, the maid, the janitor, the cashier, the cleaning employee and much more? You might ask yourself the question who are we? Who are we in this vast country that rejects us and yet still look for someone like us for the dirty work they wouldn't dare to do? Who are we in this foreign country where my food is loved and my language is admired, but the people who cook it is discriminated for solely speaking in our mother tongue? Who are we in this strange country away from our motherland where we came just to improve ourselves, but we still get discriminated for having a different color skin? Are we criminals for just wanting to come here and improve our lifestyle? Are we the hard worker who gets abuse at their job because all we want is to make money to improve our families lifestyle? We for sure are all that, but we have more to offer than just being a hard worker immigrant who only came to this country to be something that we couldn't in our home country because we didn't have the opportunity to grow.

We are architects, artists, film directors, engineers, singers, composers, actors and actresses, inventors, soccer players, Olympic medalists, justice and freedom fighters. We are indigenous people, and we are Spanish too.

We are the children born out of these two races that met each other more than 500 hundred years ago and that together built my motherland through the course of the years. We are mestizos! We are Mexicans!

Mexico has given to the world things that you could never imagine. From Guillermo Gonzales Camarena who invented the first TV color system in the world, to Doctor Luis Ernesto Miramontes who created the first contraceptive method in the world. To going into the artistic and cultural world with the famous paintings of Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo and Jose Maria Velasco, and going to the “Mexican golden age” where great actors, actresses, singers were born such as Cantinflas, Pedro Infante, Jorge Negrete, Capulina, Maria Felix and more celebrities that were formed during the modernization of Mexico such as Roberto Gomez Bolanos “el Chavo”, Antonio Aguilar, Vicente Fernandez, Juan Gabriel, Rocio Durcal, Jose Jose, Emmanuel, Maricela, Beatriz Adriana, and then the contemporary Mexico with its new generation of actors such as Diego Luna, Gabriel Garcia Bernal, Diego Boneta, Yalitza Apalacio, Salma Hayek, and wonderful film directors like Guillermo del Toro or Alejandro Gonzales Iñárritu who have worked and created great movies in Hollywood. We have famous athletes such as the boxers Julio Cesar Chavez and Saul “Canelo” Alvarez, we also have soccer players like Javier “El Chicharito” Hernandez, Guillermo Ochoa, Cuauhtémoc Blanco, and we have Olympic winners such as Ana Gabriela Guevara. But we have not only given the world artists and celebrities, but Mexico has given the best of its brilliant minds. We have Mexicans working for NASA, something that you never thought of, such as Doctor Ellen Ochoa born of Mexican parents in Los Angeles, CA, considered the first Mexican astronaut who participated in the spatial missions of Discovery and Atlantis.

We also have shared our culture, traditions and cuisine with the world. We have shared our gastronomy, so that everyone can enjoy. We have tacos de asada, pastor, carnitas, pollo, lengua (tongue), cabeza (cow head), and all types of meat you can imagine. We have sopes, flautas, pozole, menudo, enchiladas, tortas, ceviche, coctel de camaron, caldo de pollo y de res, (beef and chicken soups), chapulines (grasshoppers), maguey worms. We have popular drinks such as chocolate abuelita (hot chocolate), champurrado, atole, tequila, mezcal, tepache, tejuino, beer and wine. We have desserts like pan dulce (sweet bread), churros, Mexican candy, and much more. We have shared our traditions like the Day of the Death where we remember our loved ones who have left this world, our Independence Day, our own way to celebrate Christmas. We’ve

given the world our music such as mariachi, rancheras, cumbia, norteñas, folkloric music, huapangos, and corridos.

We are kind, emotional, passionate, patriots, hardworking and honest people not only in our country, but outside of it as well, especially in the United States despite some people would think of us as criminals, rapists, thieves, drug dealers, lazy because we party a lot, that we depend on people that fulfills our whims, and that we take advantage of others around us. Perhaps that is true to a certain point, but you're wrong if you tag all Mexicans under the same negative label because just like every society and nation in this planet, they all share these bad characteristics. We are human beings.

It has been difficult for me to define what it means to be Mexican since it never crossed in mind the thought of having to define what I am, what my country represents, and where I come from. I lived 16 years of my life in Mexico and I never felt more Mexican now that I am living here in the United States. Because now I have to prove wrong all those people who discriminate us and show them that we can be much more than their mistaken opinions about us. We can prove them that we can be more than what they are no matter our color skin, our nationality, our ethnicity or our language. To be Mexican abroad is to feel in your blood all those traditions, customs, celebrations, festivities that were created in Mexico and that we share with the world. To be Mexican is to be proud of speaking your mother tongue despite other people discriminate you because they couldn't understand you. Being Mexican is to share your gastronomy with your foreign mates, so they can enjoy the taste of a good meal. Being Mexican is to share and show off the achievements of your compatriots to the world. To be Mexican is to feel goosebumps when you hear the sound of the national anthem in a public place. To be Mexican is to carry a rosary, a cross, or an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe to show the world that we are Catholics and believers. It's to show off to the world that we are blessed by God himself because he sent his mother, the Virgen Mary under an image that we are familiar with, an image of a indigenous woman called la Virgen de Guadalupe to make us believe in Him. To be Mexican is to be Mariano (Marian). To be Mexican outside your homeland is to be proud of wearing your national flag on your back, so you show the world where you come from and how much you have achieved.

VIVA MEXICO!



## **Planets**

Ezequiel Hernandez-Cruz



**Portraits** - (Right to left, top to bottom) Allison Rodriguez, Manju Mangar, & Helen Lalhriatpuii

# The American Dream and Racism

Anthony Torres Carrillo

Historian and author of the essay “Definitions,” Ibram Kendi, is an award-winning and influential figure who writes on topics relating to race issues. The essay “Definitions” is a passage from his book, published in 2019, titled *How to Be an Antiracist*. The passage blends his personal experience with racism and uses statistics that examine the racial inequities caused by disastrous policies. His overall point, based on the title “Definitions,” is to persuade his audience into first defining what it means to be racist and anti-racist to allow the audience to become virtuous so that the audience can use these righteous morals to find ways to become anti-racist. He organizes his claims using historical facts, events, and his family’s narrative to show how racism towards minorities has prevented them from prospering and achieving their own *American Dream*.

In his essay, he talks about racist policies and racial inequity to later explain the negative effects they had on minorities. He specifically gives examples of significant symbols, references events from American history, and quotes notable people. He sets the differences between the situations of white families and all other families of different races to show that the two groups are not equal. The non-white families have lagged in being able to achieve their full potential compared to white families. Kendi, indirectly, demonstrates that white families can achieve the best of what American life offers, whereas non-white families face obstacles that should be eliminated. I believe that *The American Dream* in context to Ibram Kendi’s essay is that racism prevents all races and backgrounds living in the United States of America from obtaining equal standing and opportunity as the other races and ethnicities living in the United States of America, despite the promise that hard work will bring success.

Ibram Kendi begins with his claim about the importance of establishing a clear definition of racist and anti-racist ideas to develop the consciousness and manifest the root of the lack of progress in the *American Dream* so that with that knowledge, it can allude to the progression in fighting against restrictive, racist policies established in the country. Kendi explains that there are only racist or anti-racist ideas

and policies where racist ideas are the belief that one group is inferior to another (Kendi par. 11). Racist ideas are linked to racist policies when politicians in power with racist beliefs create restrictive policies. Racist policies are not laws to promote racial discrimination like what the United States experienced until the Civil Rights Movement. He also questions whether it is racist to have racial discrimination producing inequity (par, 7). Kendi's goal is to persuade the reader into stopping racist policies from taking effect and to have his audience be self-aware and examine themselves to see how to be anti-racist. He stresses that there is no such thing as non-racist ideas and hopes the audience to instead use the term use racist or anti-racist to determine whether a policy falls under that category. With this he suggests that for all groups to be on the same page, or an equal foot, some groups would have to be treated differently which I believe means that some groups would have to receive more resources than others to make it attainable for all groups to achieve the *American dream* which would be considered anti-racist, but many would believe it is reverse discrimination.

Another term he differentiates is discrimination to the word racist to describe how American society, with or without knowing, can favor one race over another which creates another obstacle for minorities. He blames Americans that have the power to execute laws to perpetuate racism saying, "The racist champions of racist discrimination engineered to maintain racial inequities before the 1960s are now the racist opponents of antiracist discrimination engineered to dismantle those racial inequities" (par. 9). Government officials who were racist purposely created obstacles to prevent non-whites to achieve what American Dream promised, making it hard to reach success. According to Kendi's definitions, Americans today who are against taking measures to decrease the inequities, such as a radical action of reverse discrimination, would actually be the racist ones for stopping a possible way to achieve equity. Earlier, Kendi explains that due to these racist policies, people would take advantage of the policy in a way to start discriminating against people of different races (par. 6). These policies are the cause and the perpetuation of discrimination because the policies limit the freedoms and make it more dangerous for minorities to live because there is lack of protection from the law. These policies were created to specifically target minorities which in return made it hard to achieve the *American Dream*.

Throughout his essay, he indirectly reveals that the **lack of equity** in marginalized groups compared to white families is the opposite of what

the *American Dream* preaches. Using statistics, he shows how racial inequity is prevalent in many parts of the country revealing that “71 percent of White families lived in owner-occupied homes in 2014, compared to 45 percent of Latinx families and 41 percent of Black families” (par. 3). It is worth noting that he mentions the statistics in home ownership to demonstrate that home ownership is an essential part of American life and the result of success. It is clear that the lack of equity due to racist policies throughout the years is a big concern for Kendi. Ta-Nehisi Coates, writer of the essay “A Case for Reparations”, shares a similar concern regarding the lack of home ownership explaining “...there was no financing for people like Clyde Ross. From the 1930s through the 1960s, black people across the country were largely cut out of the legitimate home-mortgage market through means both legal and extralegal” (Coates par. 18). Coates indirectly blames mortgage lenders, who were powerful white people, as the cause for the creation of inequity for Black families. These policies were created because the same powerful government officials allowed it to happen and in return would only receive minor repercussions. These families worked hard to obtain the basic necessities but were later cheated off a system that promised to grant them their possessions.

Due to the lack of equity, Kendi declares that we must treat people differently in order to achieve the equality needed to chase the *American Dream*. He starts to develop this idea after supporting his claim on defining what is racist. Despite having advanced into a time where racism isn't like before the civil rights era, Americans should start to do something to make up for the damage. But to achieve this, *Affirmative Action* could be a solution that would give more attention and aid towards the marginalized races. However, many Americans think that the idea is racist but in actuality, those Americans are racist because they do not think about the hardships that these marginalized races have been through, and thus are against racial equity (Kendi par. 10). These families worked hard and were not able to succeed despite following the promises of the *American Dream*. So Kendi's idea could allow those who had worked hard, to obtain their deserved possessions of the *American Dream* after all those years. But for those who had not worked hard but were born into inequity, would be receiving those benefits too and anger white Americans for the reverse discrimination. So, I understand why *Affirmative Action* such as the argument for reparations is controversial.

In modern days, talks about a well-deserved aid to those who have been stopped in attaining the *American Dream* have been controversial. To

support Kendi's claim, I believe that a racist policy found today could be the censorship of reparations for minorities, especially for black families. Over the years, there had been talks and debates about whether reparations should be considered after all the racist policies that negatively affected black people since the creation of the United States. In Ta-Nehisi Coates' essay on the cause for Reparations, he tries to convince an audience that reparations could be the only way in which racial equality can occur after Blacks were forced out of their homes and their possessions that they worked hard for. Of course, this involves giving special treatments to specific racial groups, just like Kendi's claim that we must treat people differently to bring them to an equal level with the rest of the people who are better off today. Kendi wants us to recognize that there is an issue with the way the United States is run, which is with people in power and their policies. I believe that the American Dream partly consists of owning a house or at least some possessions but many minority and immigrant communities don't have access to such resources which supports Kendi's worries about the lack of equity.

We live in a time where talking about how to get anyone to achieve the American Dream is a bittersweet journey when other groups have also stayed behind. For many years, the media have informed us about the influx in immigration from around other countries in the world, especially Latin America. In a nation where we receive many immigrants, we still struggle to provide them the necessities to achieve the *American Dream*. We are shown that these immigrants have been displaced by disastrous policies that also negatively affect minorities from those countries and hope to immigrate to achieve the *American Dream* as they are left with no other choice. Later in his essay, Kendi informs the audience about the rest of the world today and how they are affected negatively by racist policies. He explains that due to climate change, many people's habitats are being destroyed and food is running scarce just because our nation, for example, does not take responsibility for the disastrous policies (par. 15). This forces immigrants to move to other parts of the world to escape from the destruction of their habitats which can also bring financial problems. Several of these immigrants must work even harder for attaining their *American Dream*.

I believe that Kendi's and Coates' picture of the American dream is similar to my interpretation of it. My interpretation of the American dream is the belief and attitude of any citizen who lives in the United States can

pursue happiness through hard work to win a better life full of opportunities every day and live more comfortably than any other place in the world, a banal belief that although repeated over and over, may not be completely true. I trace this belief back in elementary school where we were taught about the pilgrims sailing the Mayflower for a new life. I connected the significance of when European settlers came to North America to have a new and better life to my parent's journey. My parents are immigrants who have told me that they immigrated from Mexico to have a better life with better paying jobs therefore I had always thought that the American dream had to deal with prosperity and opportunity. I thought that the *American Dream* allowed everyone the right to reach prosperity despite the socioeconomic background of the person. However, this has not been the case for many other immigrant families, and I am aware that my family is luckier than others.

Finally, Kendi mentions that Americans must be self-aware, fight through what is already in place to clear the path to the *American Dream*. Despite non-white groups being in different places and we are all far behind in pursuing the benefits of the *American Dream*, we must act against the underlying causes for the misfortunes of minorities. Kendi wants us to understand that anti-racist ideas will open the underlying issue in attaining the *American Dream*, even if history has shown that policies will still be in place that unknowingly puts obstacles in front of many non-white families (par. 20). It does not mean that marginalized groups who are far behind in inequity due to racism cannot reach their own *American Dream*, it simply means that knowing how to be anti-racist will push our minds into creating a way in which everyone can succeed to obtain the rewards of the *American Dream*.

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**Sky**  
Aadesh Biswa

## **I Love Me**

Sonia Rivas

My confidence has skyrocketed, I'm happy the way I am but I still can not take a  
compliment without feeling sexualized?

Why am I only beautiful when I post a picture of myself in a bathing suit?

Am I not beautiful whenever I post a picture of just my face? Or when I'm spitting  
nonsense online and laughing of stupid things I say, and I say A LOT.

I believe I'm beautiful in many ways, I don't need validation from anyone, but sometimes

I just wish that I didn't have to doubt the compliments I get.

I love me, I'm beautiful, strong but vulnerable.

Please see that too.

## **Money and Love**

Joshua Washington

If you looked me in my eyes.

You could never feel my pain.

A heart without love is forced

To worldly gains.

By judging at my flesh,

You could never know my struggle.

Wild hearts can't be tamed that's why,

I love my hustle.



**Shading**  
Manju Mangar



**Western Kansas**  
Anthony Torres Carrillo

# On Cuba

## Sayra Salais

### 1. Community Survival in a Daily Life in Cuba

Las Terrazas. A small community of roughly 1,000 people in the municipality of Candelaria. I was very fortunate to speak with one of the 1,000 residents here in Las Terrazas. Her name is Nidia. An elementary school teacher in the only school building in the community. Nidia shared that this small community is tightly united, that fishers from every corner of the area come together and converse with one another about fishing. The children grow together with others that they considered themselves as siblings. For an approximate 30 minutes, me and Nidia, along with Tweesna, had a conversation about the daily life of an individual at Las Terrazas. A small town built in the 1960s, still well maintained as the residents are not permitted to repaint homes, so that it can be kept as beautiful as it was back in the 60s. The beautiful green scenery of Las Terrazas with a variation of colorful plants and trees. Over the last few years, this small town has become a tourist attraction for foreigners. It is the attraction to see nature while sipping on the best hot coffee. As I make my wake to the only hotel in Las Terrazas, I appreciate the children sitting outside in groups, conversing with each other. This is Las Terrazas.



## 2. Cuba's Places

No matter where you go in Cuba, the people are very welcoming and open to foreigners. The atmosphere feels positive and energetic. I love that Cienfuegos has a beautiful sunset and sunrise, which was something that we didn't experience in Havana or Trinidad. Cienfuegos had a similar vibe to Havana, but Cienfuegos felt almost magical. It was peaceful and still very enthusiastic to see people walking through the streets or having events take place. Las Terrazas was the biggest difference between the other Cuban cities. It is more nature-like scenery and you would have a deep connection to the green Earth. It is also a small town of 1,000 people, so it is less crowded and limited. And then again, Havana is the capital of Cuba, so it did meet the standards of a big city. Lots of people and great adventures to places to eat and shop. So much stuff was happening in Havana that sometimes it was hard to grasp everything that I was admiring. What makes a place different from the other is the atmosphere of the environment. If you are in a busy city where people are constantly moving back and forth, it can be overwhelming to walk down the street or find a good place to eat. If your environment is a bit quieter and laid-back, it is easier to appreciate those around you and hope to learn new names such as small business owners. I say no matter what you go, it is important to always be open-minded to new adventures. Never judge without trying to understand why it's different from what you are used to. I find myself happy anywhere I go because that is what makes the experience a lot more enjoyable. If I am able to give some of my good energy back into the atmosphere and the people around me, I am able to feel a lot better about myself. It's almost like the saying of "Make home anywhere you go". Connecting with the place is the best thing anyone can do to appreciate and learn one place from another.





**Thistle**

Anthony Torres Carrillo

# **Emulate**

Quortez E. Brown

To strive to equal or excel.

    The minor reflects the image of  
What young boy should emulate to look and see  
    Power of Greatness the throne  
Of being the Black Wolf, the Lion King of the Land  
    Build, Protect, Honest, Integrity  
For the image of a History tied to the black boy  
    Tarnished by a brain-washer  
That chalk outline carving in lies where we fail to  
    Protect, let the Shadows of  
The jungle appear and the root of power be restored  
    In the souls of the boy  
As emulate the bar set by image of the reflection  
    Of what illuminated through  
With truth, sheltered by none and he who grew  
    with him was the battle  
    of our place!!

# Language and Identity

Bawi Par

Language is not just a form of communication, but an identity that we create because it is what we are primarily using to communicate with others. It also defines where we came from; the differences in where we come from play a big role in one's identity and languages. Language helps communicate with new people as well but when it comes to learning language, it's hard for them to learn especially when immigrants are learning.

As most immigrants came from many different countries to the United States with different cultures, it is hard for them to adapt to a new language with different cultures at the same time. Thus, not only is it challenging to learn a new language but also the customs of their social norms. Many immigrants wanted to be able to communicate and be friends with Americans; however, it was difficult for them to express themselves in a way they wanted to. During the personal interview, Diyana Bawi Hnem Tial talked about how she had to migrate to the United States at a very young age and how she was struggling to adapt to the new language with a different culture which was a whole new world for her. She said, "as an immigrant, it is hard to learn a new language and start over in a new place. Before coming to the US (United States), I lived in Myanmar with my family, who spoke Chin. In Myanmar, there are many different languages, but I never really got to experience the other languages and cultures of Myanmar because I never traveled away from home."

When we don't speak the same language as everyone else, communicating with others to express ourselves is usually very hard. When I first arrived in the United States as an immigrant, I also had no knowledge in the language of English. It was very frustrating not knowing and understanding everything that was happening around me. Before I moved to the United States, I

used to live in Hakha where I was born. In Hakha, we mostly use the language of Chin. After living in Hakha for a long period of time, my family and I decided to move to Myanmar. Myanmar was known as a noticeably big country where some Hakha Chin people would also live

there for a better quality of life. At first, I thought that the people living in Myanmar would also speak the same language as I did, however it didn't take long for me to find that my assumption was wrong. Most of the residents around us were Buddhists and they could only speak the language of Burmese. Learning a new language was one of the most challenging I had to face while living there.

During my school years, It was hard for me to communicate with students and staff members due to the lack of not understanding each other's languages. Because I was so young at the time, instead of attempting to see things positively, I became irritated with myself. To communicate with them, the only way I could convey myself was to take my time before speaking to them. If they could not understand what I was trying to say, body language was one of the things I did to make them understand what I was trying to say. After going through the language obstacle, I was finally able to communicate using the burmese language naturally. After two years, I finally got used to the new culture and expressed myself the way I wanted to more clearly while spending my time getting to know the people around me and I lived there for about 7 years.

According to Sui Tin Mawi, she has only spent about 3-4 years in Myanmar, she then moved to Malay and stayed there until 1st grade. Then, she moved to the United States in second grade. Since she moved to many countries at an early age, it was hard for her to stick to one language; she would lose one language while learning another. Even now, she is still struggling to keep up with all the languages she has learned. She still remembers her first day of school in the United States. Everything felt very foreign which made her scared of everything. It took her about three months to finally gain trust and try to interact with others.

Just like Mawi, I experienced moving to many countries. I have moved to three countries of different languages, Hakha, Myanmar, and the United States. Since I have an accent in three languages which consist of Hakha Chin, Burmese, and English. It is easy for me to forget the languages that I know when I start to learn a new language just like how the author Jenny Liao had forgotten her Cantonese language. At first, she was fine with her first language but later when she got used to English, she naturally forgot her first language and it was even hard to communicate with her parents. To communicate with her parents, she had to use translation apps to communicate. " My first language, Cantonese, is the only one I share with my parents and as it slips from my memory, I also lose my ability to communicate with them"( Jenny Liao). I understand why

Jenny Lio forgot her first language. When I first learned Burmese, I struggled with speaking my first language because my first language is the only way to communicate with my family and the people of Hakha. In addition, I primarily used Burmese as we were living in a community full of Burmese people. Out of all the languages that I have learned, English is the most frustrating and difficult to learn. When I first learned English, it was hard to learn. It is still a problem for me.

In 2017, I came here to the United States and went to high school with English being my third language. At first, when I attended school, they called an interpreter for me to show me the school and schedule for my classes, but after that, I had to take care of myself. At the beginning of the semester, I went to my classroom, and I remembered there were my classmates who were looking at me and waiting for me to introduce myself. I could not give a proper introduction to the class because I was shaking, nervous, and scared. At that time, I also had extremely limited knowledge of English, so I remembered telling them only my name and where I came from and sat where my teachers assigned me. I also had difficulty understanding what the teachers said. I wanted to communicate with other classmates, but I could not because I feared talking. I thought to myself that, if I spoke, my other classmates would make fun of my accent. During class, all I

thought was, "When will this be done and when can I go home?". I put my head down and cried quietly. Since I already had the nostalgia of when I struggled with learning Burmese, I was already having an extremely tough time. However, even though it is hard for me to learn and frustrating and stressful for me, I gave myself hope to overcome my fear and my lack of communication and tried my best to understand their language. Language is crucial for our society. Not knowing any language is a big issue for people who are immigrants. I thought that I was the only one who had a challenging time learning a new language and who worried that people might make fun of their accent. However, I realized that others experienced and went through tough times as I did. In 2015, Tha Par who is also an immigrant went through the struggle of not being able to say things as much as she wanted to. English was not her first language either and she could not say things as much as she wanted to say, like how I struggled as well. She was also worried about her accent as well.

In conclusion, learning a new language is one of the most difficult tasks that many young immigrants encounter while also attempting to adapt to

a new culture. Speaking English was not the easiest accomplishment I had achieved thus far when compared to when I first arrived in the United States, but it was one of the most satisfying.

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# **Mexican Tree Frog**

Sonia Rivas

Sometimes I feel like the Mexican tree frog,  
and not because I can jump high,  
I assure you quite the opposite.  
I'm small in size compared to my friends,  
but that doesn't stop me from being threatening to them sometimes.  
But like the Mexican Tree Frogs,  
I am a threatened species.  
There's very few people like me,  
but none other exactly as me.  
No one else can care the way that I do.  
No one else can make you laugh the way that I do.  
And no one else is as sympathetic as I am.  
The Mexican Tree Frog is a nightly creature,  
and let me tell you, if I don't take melatonin or benadryl for my allergies,  
I too become a nightly creature,  
wondering at night hunting for snacks in my fridge,  
most of the time cheese sticks.  
But most importantly, I'm also Mexican.



## **Beyond the Realm of Reality**

Bryan Brizuela

## **Who am I?**

Sonia Rivas

It is hard to know who I am sometimes. I am a full born Mexican but it doesn't feel like I am. I have lived almost eleven years here in the United States now, and each day I feel pulled farther away from my own culture, and it is even more upsetting that it is hard to remember my childhood in Mexico, which is why I treasure every memory I have left, especially when the holidays come around. When it comes to the holidays the most I remember is Christmas, three wise men day (los 3 reyes magos), and new years, oh and the virgin mary's birthday. Those were definitely the most important ones.

For Christmas, we would turn the whole living room into El Nacimiento, Jesus' birth, and we went all out. There was hay on the floor, and we would bring in ceramic pieces of the three wise men and animals in as well. We would sing songs and eat together, reenact what happened on the day Jesus was born. We called this a posada, and we are Mexican, so it lasted all day and night, everyone slept over and me and my cousins all had to share a room together where my mom, sister, and tias had to come in almost every ten minutes because we would not go to sleep. It got scary when they said baby Jesus would not bring us any presents if we stayed up all night. Five minutes later everyone was dead asleep, or at least I think, I was.

For The Virgin Mary's day, December 12, we would sing to her, and have dances for her, the music was loud and beautiful in every single way, my tios and tias would teach my cousins and friends the dances and we'd put it all together. For the dance we had specific outfits, outfits full of colors, and long wild hats with pointy stuff at the top, the skirts would have rattlers on them so they were loud when we moved around. As a little girl it was impossible for me to do it because I was too young, but it didn't stop me from dancing and jumping around when I heard the loud music fill the air outside. It was cold but you wouldn't feel it if you danced. The beautiful night sky lit up with millions of stars, which back then didn't seem like something magical but as I grew older in a city where you can barely see the moon, I learned to hold on to those memories as much as possible.

The three wise men day, similar to Christmas, had the family stay over for the night. We would have this big oval pastry similar to a cake, and we would hide plastic baby Jesus inside of it, whoever got the piece with it inside would make the tamales for the next Christmas, this was celebrated January 6th. Our second Christmas, or first? I never really knew which one actually came first, on the calendar it was obviously The Three Wise men but we always celebrated Christmas first because of how the bible tells the story.

Though I hold these memories in my mind, and they are a reminder of what I grew up doing and celebrating, and what the origin was, I don't feel close to it anymore. As my sister would say "you are white-washed", but can I really be "white-washed" if I never went out of the house? I always stayed in the house and most of my friends are Mexican. They celebrated the things I did when I was younger, and they still do. Maybe the reason for me being like this is because I was isolated from my

family, probably not on purpose, but I wasn't around those who made the holidays big for me and everyone else, I never got to learn the famous dances, and I have forgotten how the songs went. If I was able to change the way I am and get closer to my culture, I would go visit my family, go to my cousins and learn the dances step by step, or learn how to play the drums for the music.

Half my family is the socially expected definition of being Mexican, my cousins (those close to my age at least) have had kids from a young age, started drinking and smoking, some didn't finish school and others did but refused to go to college, or they did and dropped out. There is so much in me that I know is nothing like them. It surprises me when I see my cousins curse in front of my family like it's easy. I feel bad when I say "okay" in a slightly different tone than usual, my family is loud and I am not, maybe I would be if I had spent more time with them but I didn't.

Sometimes around my family I feel like a dandelion  
When the wind blows they go together  
But I'm the odd one out,  
The small little one that did not fly with them  
I get stuck behind,  
I feel alone and wonder,  
Would I feel happy if I did fly away with them?  
Would I then fit in?  
Who am I, if I am without them?

There is so much I can do, but some things come with religious beliefs, beliefs that I stopped practicing, why? I still don't know, maybe it was because my dad was too tired to take us to church after working all week. Some say I'm angry at God because I blame him for what happened to me. Sure I find it hard to believe that there is a god sometimes, but I never blamed them for my misfortune. I knew of those who were responsible for it, and sometimes I am the reason for those things happening. Growing up Catholic and slowly over the years drifting away from the religion took a back half my family, my sister still hates it.

But this is who I am, or who I think I am. I'm 19 years old, I'm still trying to figure out who I am, and how my future will turn out to be. I am smart but sometimes I can say things that can make you think otherwise because I speak before I think. I don't go out or get ready to party and dance. The first time I did, I didn't really get ready, I just had extra clothes in my car so I changed when I got out of work and just showed up for two hours, then left because I had work in the morning. I am someone

who overworks herself to try to achieve something but most of the time I don't even know what it is.

So the answer to the question "who am I?" Well the answer is, I still don't know, I don't know myself well enough to say, but I hope to know well enough someday, I want to be known as someone who is strong but vulnerable at the same time. I want to be known as the girl who is proud of her roots and her ancestors. Someone my nieces and nephews can look up to.



**Man of the Woods**  
Angel Marrufo

## **Tulips**

Sonia Rivas

Tulips are many different colors  
Some are purple  
Some are pink, yellow, red, and white  
Or a mixture of all.  
Tulips usually represent  
Perfection and Love.  
So if you ask me.. You are my tulip.

## **American Dream & Genuine Happiness**

Sarai Thao

When I think of the American Dream, I remember the summer assigned book called *The Great Gatsby* that I had just started a week before summer ended. Even though *The Great Gatsby* did not specifically mention the American Dream, the idea of the American Dream was still so prevalent. During my junior year in highschool, we would mention the American Dream and how it impacted Gatsby's life. So to me, the American Dream became defined as the quest for extreme wealth accumulation or the quest to accomplish the goals that America deems as success. Even though Google says it's the idea that opportunities are equal to every American and the highest dreams are to be achieved, I cannot just see the American Dream in this light.

The American Dream is what America tells you to desire and achieve. The American Dream is a barrier to our truest desires. The American Dream says that money is the way first. But the quest for money and simply material success is where you lose your deepest desire. Gatsby, in the same way, started an illegal bootleg business just so he could receive

Daisy's love. But the idea that Gatsby had to reach wealth first when all he really wanted was love demonstrates that monetary goals are not the source of happiness, but just a means to function in the world, or possibly America. Mark Edmundson supports the idea that in the pursuit of happiness or success, the American Dream, which is the pursuit of money, is not the right path. He uses college students to support his idea that most students believe the American Dream, which they turned into their own, is getting their credentials and education, finding a job, and then being successful in it and hopefully they are happy and satisfied. But actually the American Dream and genuine happiness does not go hand-in-hand. The American Dream does not exist in terms of real happiness. That's because a real education is to learn who you are to know what you love

because eventually doing what you love will bring you happiness that the deepest part of your soul desires. In *The Great Gatsby*, Gatsby is a rich man who is considered "new money." This means that Gatsby acquired money that was not passed on, but accumulated through him. Daisy, on the other hand, inherited and lived in wealth from the beginning, which considers as "old money." Gatsby and Daisy met when Gatsby was serving. Gatsby fell in love, but he felt unworthy of being Daisy's lover because he came from a poor background. In hopes of receiving Daisy's love, he wanted to become worthy and his idea, or possibly "America's idea" was to become wealthy. He established a short-cut by organizing a secret and illegal bootleg business to acquire massive wealth. He is now worthy of Daisy's love and can now pursue her. Or so he thought. He can still pursue her, but there is no guarantee of him achieving his happiness with his "American Dream." In the same way, Mark Edmundson challenges college students to rethink their own goals for college or their "American Dream." He formed an assumption that most college students ideally think that going to college to get a good job means happiness in the end and college students have achieved their American Dream. Once again, college students can pursue their idea of education and success, but like Gatsby, many have the wrong idea of "how" and "what is?" Most college students use a shortcut and most of it might be illegal or just rightfully wrong. Edmundson posed that the education system is unfair because most college students cheat and use their place of power to get ahead and not do the work that actually enables them to become successful. Edmundson posed that the real work or education they have to do or learn is to understand themselves because once you know yourself, you can find what your deepest desire is.

The American Dream however, is the biggest barrier to our deepest desire. In Edmundson's essay, he invites the idea that America had placed their values on us and had already created our dreams. "Americans value power and money. Big players with big bucks." (Paragraph 10) It's no joke that America places all value on power and money. It's also no joke that power and money can make a person advance fast. But he also argues that even though that's what America values, it doesn't mean we should make those values our own. Instead, he offers us to learn about ourselves because he brings up an interesting point that we have been made by our surroundings. "They've let you know how they size you up, and they've let you know what they think you should value" (Paragraph 28). This sentence here should be a warning because most freshly new college students or most people out there don't know that their values are actually passed down. He challenges students to dive deep down and evaluate or search for what is truly their own principles. Therefore, he poses the idea of a real education. "Education is about finding out what form of work for you is close to being play — work you do so easily that it restores you as you go" (Paragraph 49).

In my opinion, our deepest desire lies within our motivation. I believe that whatever motivates us, that end goal is the accomplishment we desire. "Happiness, beatitude, is the satisfaction we hope to find when we reach a final goal and attain perfection we have longed for. We can want many different things at the same time, large and small, yet at any one moment there must be a deepest desire which motivates us, an overriding goal that functions as an organizing principle to our actions, one which we long for as our 'perfect and fulfilling good'" (Wang 322). From this passage, it supports the idea that happiness is that one true desire our soul longs for. Edmundson also poses an example of where true desire could be found: "What if you arrive at college devoted to premed, sure that nothing will make you and your family happier than life as a physician, only to discover that elementary school teaching is where your heart is?" (Paragraph 47).

Edmundson once again brings up the idea of how our surroundings influences where we think our happiness is. But he speaks the truth about what could happen once you find your passion. "The student who eschews medical school to follow his gift for teaching small children spends his twenties in low-paying but pleasurable and soul-rewarding toil" (Paragraph 50). Here, the student still enjoys his work because it's where his deepest desire is, he is motivated by what his soul was made for. And

with that strong motivation, eventually he became successful. He wrote his first book about teaching, which no one bought, but his motivation and passion for teaching made him write a second one that others did buy. Nonetheless, Edmundson encourages you to learn about yourself and in doing so, you have to read. Quite ironic since he is an English professor, but he is right. "In reading, I continue to look for one thing — to be influenced, to learn something new, to be thrown off my course and onto another, better way" (Paragraph 39). It's almost as if I said that statement myself.

The reason why I mention Gatsby is because it reminds me of how human desire has a deeper form and happiness lies deeper than you think. Gatsby ran away with his idea of love, but pursued what he thought America needed him to do first. When in reality, all he wanted was to be loved. In the same way, college students pursue what they think their parents, counselor, friends, and America think they should do first. Go to college, get a good job, be successful and happy. But what if college was not even supposed to be the first step? In my heart, I knew that what I desire was music. But I approached something completely different when I thought about my college major because on the surface, I wanted to make my mom proud. I want to follow what she wanted because unfortunately, her values were forced on me. But reading books after books, I learn for myself where my deepest desire was. I may not have the passion for creating music itself, but I can sing all day. I found a form of play that I can't grow weary of which is to support what Robert said "when we expend our energies in rightful ways, Robert Frost observed, we stay whole and vigorous and we don't get weary. 'Strongly spent,' the poet says, 'is synonymous with kept.'" - P51. This is a phrase I strongly agree with because I lived it myself. I know now that I was born to be a performer. I might be a creator one day, but right now my soul longed to perform.

To conclude, I see that Gatsby and Edmundson's dad might be similar in some ways. Both may not have reached the full being of what they could've been. I wished Gatsby would have experienced for himself where his soul was. I wished he focused on himself first. And I also wished I didn't have to cry for Gatsby's funeral in my room late at night. It's tragic because once you make America's Dream your dream, genuine happiness that your soul was made for might not be experienced. All Gatsby was left with was money he didn't need and a love that was not genuine.

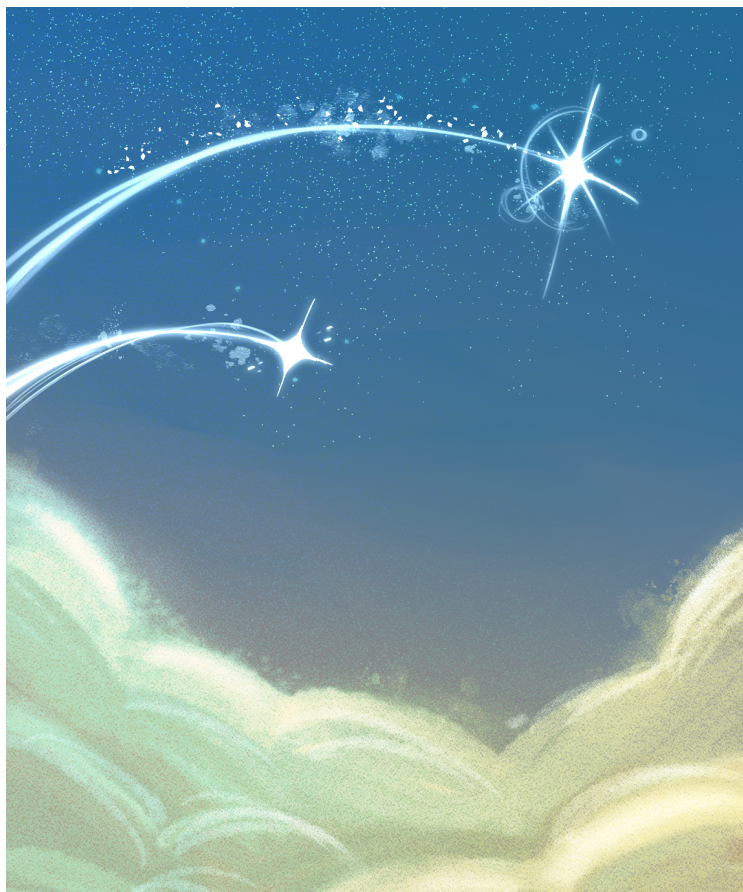
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### **Mushrooms**

Sarai Thao



**Illustration**  
Emillyanna Her

## **Tulips Pt. 2**

Sonia Rivas

The color of the tulips have different meanings.

Pink is for happiness and confidence, just like I hope to gain.

Purple is for royalty, because I know I'm a queen.

Yellow is for cheerful thoughts, just like the ones I get from thinking of you.

White is for forgiveness, and I hope to forgive myself one day for being so harsh on myself.

Orange is for understanding and appreciation, so I owe orange tulips to half the staff.

Blue is for uniqueness, because there is not one like me.

Lastly, we have red, which means everlasting love, like the one I hope to find someday.



**Butterfly**  
Sarai Thao

# Afro Cuban Struggles

Sayra Salais

In a diverse country such as Cuba, an appreciation and respectful attitude among Cubans, the culture and heritage carry the legacy of a great nation. On this educational trip to Cuba, I was amazed with the well-giving spirit and gesture that Cubans demonstrate to me as well as being able to gain knowledge about rich historical sites and Afro Culture. Just like in the United States, Cuba has a fair share of a slavery history and oppression to their Black compatriots – Afro Cubans who descended from African slaves brought to Cuba during the colonial times. When Fidel Castro came to power in the early 1960s, the Afro-Cubans were disproportionately poor and marginalized, lacking in every aspect of human necessities. His ‘solution’ was to address the issue without changing underlying structural biases in Cuban society. What measurements were further considered that would construct an equal AND justice direction for Afro Cubans? When I was roaming through the streets of Havana, neighborhoods with most Black Cubans looked extremely mishandled and abused in comparison to the nicer neighborhoods where they are a minority. Government policies were made to eliminate the racial inequality and discrimination towards Black Cubans, in terms of housing and employment. However, statistics and data indicated otherwise. Why is that Afro-Cubans continue to live the effects of socioeconomic disparities in such communities?

It's important to recognize first and foremost Fidel Castro's implementation attempt to create policies to eliminate racial inequalities and discrimination in 1959. To begin, racism and discrimination against Cubans of African descent go back to the colonial times as their ancestors were enslaved. One is to recognize that Fidel did give some opportunities to Black Cubans to healthcare, employment, and housing improvement, but not directly addressing the issue complicates the development of wanting to ‘reduce’ these issues. In the book *The Power of Race in Cuba*, author Danielle Pilar Cleland argues that, “While race was often negated and seldom discussed in other Latin American countries, Cuba, in effect, legislated this silence” (p. 6). This meant Cuba's effort to disclose the issue of race, and therefore, remove the subject from the public sphere had consequences.

Many Cubans believe that all Cubans are the same, no one below or above the other, indicating that by oppressing the race topic or more so, ignoring and hiding the problem is problematic. In the book *Race, Inequality, and Politics in Twentieth-Century Cuba*, Alejandro de La Fuente argues that linking the revolution to the racial injustice that Afro Cubans suffer is a problematic move because it implies racial inequality is dependent on a set of structures that the Cuban government has implemented. People's expectation for governors and governments to enforce proper and adequate social norms for all people demonstrates what I personally believe is the rise of people going against the government for lack of duty. White Cubans perceived Afro-Cubans' lack of education as a manifestation of black problems. This creates a problem that Black Cubans are dehumanized and ripped from having the same privileges as White Cubans in terms of economic, housing and material necessities. One must not lose patience once learning how the Castro government addressed the issue of how racism can come to an end instead of believing that it will become worse.

The improved access of human necessities such as employment and housing during the Castro's era is evident to move forward with a goal to 'eliminate' racism and discrimination ever since the colonial times. Victims of race discrimination had very little resources, especially if the government did not target reforms, spending on house quality and/or racial profiling by police. According to the journal article, "The Erosion of Racial Equality in the Context of Cuba's Dual Economy", by Sarah A. Blue, "In urban neighborhoods with the worst housing conditions and the worst reputation for high criminality rate, today Afro-Cubans are more likely to live with extended families, crowded into small, dilapidated living spaces" (p. 41). Poor housing conditions limited Black and Mulatto families to gain opportunities to be profitable in forms of self-employment. For example, renting out rooms or starting private businesses, such as restaurants for tourists. Survey from 334 Cuban households in December 2000, demonstrates racial inequities exist in access to U.S dollars through state employment and self-employment. In all sectors of employment demonstration types of the lowest pay, Black Cubans were at a greater disadvantage relative to White Cubans in their access to the dollar economy, resulting in lower levels of income (*The Erosion of Racial Equality in the Context of Cuba's Dual Economy*, p. 49). Although Afro-Cubans have faith that their chance for higher education will acquire a higher standard of living, their higher education will not guarantee a greater access to the dollar economy, which is a privileged and social

standing in Cuban society. Access to jobs through official or permitted contact with tourists, have been limited to White Cubans only, which is reflected in the income salaries between Black and White households. The December 2000 survey project provides a glimpse of the effects of weakened socialist programs and the tentative market opening on racial equality among Black and White Cubans in Havana (*The Erosion of Racial Equality in the Context of Cuba's Dual Economy*, p. 49).

A survey taken by roughly a 1,000 Cubans from across the island, conducted between January 2017 and April 2018, was asked to identify themselves based on the color of their skin. Out of 286 respondents undertaking private sector activities, more than 60% reported sales of less than CUC 500 per month (*When Racial Inequalities Return: Assessing the Restratisation of Cuban Society 60 Years After Revolution*). According to the National Office of Cuban Statistics, the data provided only shows the salaries in highly devalued Cuban pesos. The most response was an annual income less than CUC 3,000, while 12 percent between 3,000 and 5,000, and the rest higher than CUC 5,000. Now, when we look at the numbers and reflect on the individual person, we see that the contrasts are much higher among Afro-Cubans. 95 percent Black Cubans report an annual income of CUC 5,000 or less, while anything above CUC 5,000 was only exclusive to White Cubans (Table 1. Income and Savings by Race). However, nowadays, most state-run, and private businesses have become CUC-based, which has become impossible for most Cubans to satisfy their daily needs. (*When Racial Inequalities Return: Assessing the Restratisation of Cuban Society 60 Years After Revolution*, pg. 35-36). Since the studies and reports given since the early 1990s, White Cubans continue to have privileged access to hard currency. Unless more specific policies are adopted and made, there will continue to be an increase of racial inequality in terms of salary and available job opportunities. The ability to not only be limited to these opportunities, but having the government make the people believe that racism has been 'solved' or 'eliminated' just increases the likelihood of Afro Cubans to unfortunately be employed and live in smaller, apartment-style housing with limited physical space. When I went to Cuba in May, walking through the streets, I was able to see that a lot of these homes were indeed too small for a family to live in. A 'guaranteed' chance for Black Cubans to live under a small roof and a low-pay job is not an end to racial inequalities in Cuba.

Why do Afro-Cubans continue to live the effects of socioeconomic disparities in such communities? Easy. What all African descendants

experience daily through the American continent, including the United States and Canada. The discrimination and racism by the higher-level socioeconomic hierarchy to the lowest. Constantly get harassed by the police, racial profiling while shopping and even profiting certain African cultural braids from public spaces. All these obstacles are small things that are a part of and participate in a bigger issue. Afro-Cubans must navigate their struggles in Cuba as Cuban citizens but also a Black man and woman. It's having to work twice as much as others, and receive little bits of here and there, and sometimes, none. This should be a call for action for all Afro-Latinos, and for Afro-Cubans in particular, it has been a start of a new beginning. Last year in July, I saw on the news that Afro-Cubans were at the forefront of the island's protests. The underrepresented and marginalized group is fighting decades of economic, housing, and food deprivation. This could have been motivated by Black Lives Matter 2020 movement in the United States. Indeed, I was able to experience a wonderful Cuban play that depicted the oppression and continuous struggles of Afro Cubans and Black descendants from around the world. "Listen to Black Cuban voices, listen to those who resist oppression day after day", quote by Raul Soublett, an Afro Cuban activist in Havana.

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## Thank you

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