

Where I'm From

We come from the America of are and be, of soy y somos.
It is an America that does not belong to one race or one tribe.
It is even more than Black and White.
Our America is made up of mountain flutes and ancient step pyramids,
of bright color woven fabrics
and tobacco fields worked like black gold by dark hands,
of Asian blood and sweat operas
on railroad tracks and concentration camps,
of Mexicans who still live on the land of their ancestors,
even though its name was changed to
California, Arizona, Texas, Nevada, Utah—NEW Mexico,
of many diasporas trapped in urban landscapes,
of motherless children whose daddy is at war,
of crowded streets, long lines, empty pockets
and unjust verdicts for police who destroy,
of massacred ancestors, English only rules, sterilized wombs
and an island tethered to unexploded target-practice bombs,
of the cupboard is bare, no one cares
while children in limbo are searching for the sun.

Our America speaks Choctaw, Crow, Nez Perce, and Zapotec,
Ojibwe, Patois, Pidgin, and Portuguese,
Mandarin, Mayan, Korean, and Quechua,
Creole, Danish, French, and Dakota,
Punjabi, Hindi, Nagual and Sign
Arabic, Congo, Swahili, and too many dialects of Spanish to count.

This America is a Nuyorican-Diasporican-Afrorican state of mind,
that celebrates difference, educated in defiance,
peace-loving, stands up for justice,
that knows when to walk away and let go,
and does not seek to be something other than itself.

In this America you can sit anywhere on the bus,
talk however you must, receive self-knowledge you can trust.

Where I'm from thoughts rise up from creation stories
passed on through grandmothers
and God is also a woman whose spirit is as evolved as any man's.

Where I'm from, no matter what color your skin,
you can dance and worship at the same time
and God will descend from heaven to speak with you face to face.

Where I'm from there are no free rides,
only hard work and short nights
in a world full of stars, and poets, and artists, and teachers,
and healers, and thinkers, and seers and dreamers.
Where everyone has a place to be,
can go deep within and learn to be free,
expect respect and claim our voice,
pursue our form of happiness and our right of choice.

In this America our capacity to love is what defines us, unites us.
And what we give with our heart is the essence of our true value.
Where I'm from, love is real, and it starts by giving
into the circle in and out of ourselves.

—Sandra María Esteves
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