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Border X-ing

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Border X-ing

Abstract

The sun out-stretched its bright arms in an embrace with the mesquite trees that beckoned upwards. The wind greeted the clothes drying upon delicate wire while my mother meticulously placed white towels in the light and the jeans under the shade of the Arizona Ash. The washboard sits upright in the bucket full of suds and other assorted laundry. Inside the shed there is both a working dryer and washer only a few years old, but she has chosen to do this chore outside. Here she can close her eyes and be back in Mexico with the dry heat and the dusty wind hitting against the houses of colorful concrete walls. She senses the animals of the ranch pecking at the maize that has been long picked since the harvest. She hears the commotion of the bar-b-que that is smoking next door at *Tia Alaida's* house, a world that I have only visited a few times, never quite experiencing it as deeply as she. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, English as a Second Language (ESL), Mexican-American, stereotypes, Education

Disciplines

Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education | Educational Sociology | Ethnic Studies | Latina/o Studies | Race and Ethnicity | Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies | Sociology of Culture

Comments

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](https://www.gettysburg.edu) where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at surgegettysburg.wordpress.com Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that –isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

SURGE

[VERB] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

BORDER X-ING

February 11, 2015

The sun out-stretched its bright arms in an embrace with the mesquite trees that beckoned upwards. The wind greeted the clothes drying upon delicate wire while my mother meticulously placed white towels in the light and the jeans under the shade of the Arizona Ash. The washboard sits upright in the bucket full of suds and other assorted laundry. Inside the shed there is both a working dryer and washer only a few years old, but she has chosen to do this chore outside. Here she can close her eyes and be back in Mexico with the dry heat and the dusty wind hitting against the houses of colorful concrete walls. She senses the animals of the ranch pecking at the maize that has been long picked since the harvest. She hears the commotion of the bar-b-que that is smoking next door at *Tia Alaida's* house, a world that I have only visited a few times, never quite experiencing it as deeply as she.



The Texas humidity brings soft droplets of perspiration. As the sweat trickles and dances down her face, she is back on this side of the Rio Grande. As hard as I may try, her past memories are not my reality. I have shared countless moments with my *Tias* and *Tios* as they generously try to include me in culture experiences. They animatedly tell me scary stories of the *lechuza* and the *llorana*, but, when I look into the dark, the shadows do not resemble these frightening specters. At ten thirty mass—bilingual mass—with my mother and siblings, I find it hard to follow some of the devout catholic Spanish terminology. I'm stuck. Between. Outside. Where?

At pre-school, I was a child among other children as we laughed hanging from the monkey bars. We were just children until some of us were pulled into English as a Second Language (ESL) class, where finally I noticed differences. Now I was a child with others whose parents also were from Mexico, even if some did not speak Spanish. Separate lunch table and separate recess time and summer schooling were forced upon us. When we received state assessment test scores, I was placed in partial time with my ESL friends and partial with the Gifted and Talented students. In the GT class, everyone else's families had grown up in our town for generations. I was on the outside again here. As my mother fought to keep me permanently in the GT class group, I grew up away from my Mexican-American compatriots. I was stuck then, too.

When I decided to go out-of-state, I found myself wedged between here and there and us and you. In and out. Unlike most ESL students, I did not drop out but instead I became a new [statistic](#). Peers would time and time remind me, I wasn't like the *insert every fucking stereotype in the book here, please* "Mexican." Instead, I was cultured and intelligent and polite. I didn't have an accent even when Spanish was my first language but then again sometimes words don't come easily to me in conversation. I was going to a "real" college not getting an associates at trade school or working the fields. I was to be proud of myself for defying such inevitable odds. I was never just another ambitious student. It was a *miracle* for a Hispanic student to aspire to attend college and *dream* of something more.

But in my final year at Gettysburg, I have come to accept that I pursued the American Dream that I inherited. As the doctors placed me into my mother's hands, her dreams and aspirations for the future became my duty to fulfill. The sweat dripping off my father's brow became my own determination and work ethic. Stuck to fight for that moment where I can triumphantly accept my degree, get a job, settle down, and live out the rest of my life like the prototypical "American." What happens when I don't want any of that? Am I to take my other dreams and drive into a canyon with them? Society and my parents have dictated such strict script and I stuck to my lines thus far.

Never quite on either side. I find myself pinned to the center of an 'x.' In a never ending dream, I swim aimlessly from one shore to the next. The firm *tierra* of the *rancho* feels strong, proud, and compact as if it will always be there to comfort me. The soft clay where my house resides upon feels springy and full of hope for what may come. I am constantly trying to appease both sides of an identity but still stay true to who I am as a human being. So, am I stuck? Are you stuck? Is the 'x' a one dimensional plane—North, South, East, West?

As I join my mother, I wring the clothes and look across the field of sunflowers. Bright yellow faces immovably mirroring the sun but with a different eloquent beauty.

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