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To Be (Native) American

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To Be (Native) American

Author Bio

Julián Sánchez-Melchor is a Religious Studies major at Gettysburg College, class of 2024, focusing his study on Christianity, Indigenous Acknowledgment, and Writing. In his work, he writes to capture the joys and struggles of his life as a queer Mexican-American, of indigenous descent. Julián has incredible pride in being a person of color and in his heritage. His art also reflects how his life has been shaped by Schizoaffective Disorder, a disability containing the symptoms of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

To Be (Native) American

JULIÁN SÁNCHEZ-MELCHOR

*America was born free, man divided it
And if to the centuries we go:
We are more American,
we are more American
then the son of Anglo-Saxon*

–Los Tigres del Norte, translated from their song “Somos Más Americanos”

My father said to me, “Son, please be proud,
burst with joy in being connected to a place,
and you may rest, sweetly, among the clouds.”

Tell me how? When I feel as if I’m not allowed
to denounce the public about the horrors that we face,
but my father said to me, “Please be proud.”

My trust I refuse to misplace, this I have vowed,
and once the Maker and I finally embrace,
I will wander, livid, among the clouds.

I ache from enduring isolation, even in a crowd.
I hate how pain is deeply rooted in one’s race,
but my father said to me, “Please be proud.”

Grateful I am to live, yet still I wish to scream aloud,
“Stop this violence! Us Americans, war could not erase.”
Though many now rest, unrecognized, among the clouds.

My race, not my nation, is American. Lord, how’d
my blood fall so far from glory and your grace.
My father says to me, “Son, of you I am proud.”
And I dream we may rest, in peace, *high above* the clouds.