

Poetry of Resistance:
Ecos del alma



LA VOZ DE LOS ESTUDIANTES



HOLY NAMES
UNIVERSITY
Since 1868

*Poetry of Resistance:
Ecos del alma*

LA VOZ DE LOS ESTUDIANTES

OAKLAND, CA
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SPECIAL THANKS TO:

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Introduction

I began writing with my mind fixed on a few concepts I have learned, with a heart filled with rage, in anguish and loneliness. Today I am closing this first chapter amongst very good friends, feeling tenderness in my soul, and loving profusely every moment of my life. The poetry of my *compañeros* has helped me understand and accept my ordinary complexity; through the pain and dismay of my sisters and brothers I have been able to confront my fears and faults. It has been their poetry and friendships that have helped me realize that I am more alive than ever.

Wretched is he who consumes himself quietly in the embers of meekness, obedience, and resignation. It is false that the spirits of our great heroes were forged in the cold fires of submission and fear. It is untrue that virtuous and noble souls only germinate in the gardens of suffering and the sumptuous cathedrals of docility. It is false that to love and show respect for our neighbor we must march on our knees or die nailed to the cross. At what point did courage and valor become resignation before aggression and humiliation? When has the progress of Humanity rested in the trembling hands of the surrendered and conquered? Slaves are the minds who remain indifferent and unresisting before slander. Never have the progress of Humanity and fraternity ripened in the cold breasts of the Judas and Jonahs of history; never has altruism shed its

rainbow of color in the shadowy horizons of servility. Generosity, philanthropy, and freedom are daughters of the Quixotes, Bolivars, poets, and the fertile minds of students. Virtue is the patrimony of free consciences and combative souls. Fighting for justice and liberty is the more righteous of all the missions. Chanting and writing verses of love to the fallen and afflicted is the highest and most beautiful expression of resistance. Crying poetry is to renounce cowardice to become beings of fire and light. To write poetry is the most sublime of all rebellions.

La voz de los estudiantes is a group of young poets who believe in freedom, justice, equality, and respect, but above all, a group of friends who strive for love and humanity to reign among us. Free consciences that do not recoil from slander and insult. In our brown fresh meats, the wounds of our despised parents and our raped mothers are beginning to heal; in our crystalline minds, the ideas that will combat and triumph before the violent enemy who pretends to turn us into mere shadows bleeding in the silence are being forged. It is with our youth, passion and our poetry that we make an urgent appeal: there is no more time left to be misspent, the moment to raise our battered foreheads has come to us; there is no more time to be lost, the time to fulfill our noble ideals is here, there is no more time to be wasted, we must renounce to be soldiers of God, and become, once and for all, soldiers of our free will.

Come join this battle with us willing to think, to feel, and to suffer sisters and brothers; ready be to love unrestrictedly, redemptive souls; prepare your hearts to welcome the triumph of justice and prepare to shed on the fields of battle the blood and tears that one day will cultivate the fertile hearts of our children. Let us be ready today to draw our sharp-edged dreams and ideals. Come and rise in the cloud of our poetry comrades, for in the sublime kingdom of liberty and justice, there is nothing impossible.

Guillermo Estrada

Oakland, CA. November 26, 2016.

Introducción

Comencé a escribir pensando en los pocos conceptos que he aprendido, con un corazón rabioso y en angustiada soledad; hoy termino este primer capítulo entre nobles amigos, sintiendo hermosa ternura dentro de mi alma y amando profusamente cada momento de mi vida. La poesía de mis compañeros me ha ayudado a comprender y aceptar mi llana complejidad; a través del dolor y miedo de mis hermanas y hermanos me he atrevido a enfrentar mis miedos y defectos. Es gracias a su poesía y amistad que me he dado cuenta que estoy más vivo que nunca.

Pobre es aquél que se consume quieto en las brasas de la mansedumbre, obediencia y resignación. Patrañas que los espíritus de nuestros grandes héroes háyanse forjado bajo los fríos fuegos de la sumisión y el miedo. Es falso que las almas virtuosas y nobles germinen solamente en los jardines del sufrimiento y en las catedrales suntuosas de la docilidad. Mentira que para amar y respetar al prójimo débase andar de rodillas o morir clavado en la cruz. ¿En qué momento el valor y el coraje se convirtieron en resignación ante la agresión y humillación? ¿Cuándo ha estado el progreso de la Humanidad en las trémulas manos del rendido y conquistado? Esclavas son las mentes que permanecen dóciles e indiferentes ante la tergiversación. Jamás el progreso de la Humanidad y la fraternidad han cuajado en los pechos fríos de los Judas y Jonases de la

historia, nunca el altruismo ha desprendido su arcoíris de colores en los sombríos horizontes del servilismo. La generosidad, la filantropía y la libertad son hijas de los Quijotes, Bolívares, poetas y los fértiles ideales de los estudiantes. La virtud es patrimonio de las conciencias libres y las almas combativas. Luchar por que haya justicia y libertad es la más noble de las causas. Cantar y escribir versos de amor al caído y doliente es la expresión más alta y bella de la resistencia. Escribir poesía es dejar de ser cobarde y convertirse en seres de luz y fuego. Escribir poesía es la más sublime de las rebeldías.

La voz de los estudiantes somos un grupo de jóvenes poetas que luchan por la libertad, la justicia, la igualdad y el respeto, pero muy por encima de todo, un grupo de amigos que lucha porque entre nosotros impere el amor y la Humanidad. Conciencias libres que no reculan frente a la calumnia y el insulto. En nuestras morenas y frescas carnes comienzan a sanar las heridas de nuestros despreciados padres y nuestras violadas madres; en nuestras cristalinas mentes se forjan las ideas que han de combatir y triunfar ante el violento enemigo que hoy pretende convertirnos en meras sombras que se desangren en el silencio. Con nuestra juventud, pasión y poesía hacemos un llamado urgente: no hay más tiempo que perder, el tiempo de alzar nuestra maltratada frente se nos ha venido encima; no hay más tiempo que perder, la hora de liberar nuestras palomas ideas se ha cumplido, no hay

más tiempo que perder, dejemos de ser los fieles soldados de dios para convertirnos, de una buena vez, en los soldados de nuestro albedrío.

Asistan a esta batalla con nosotros dispuestos a pensar, a sentir y a sufrir hermanas y hermanos; listos estén para amar desbordados libérrimos redentores, aprestad sus corazones para recibir el triunfo de la justicia y prepárense para dejar en el campo de batalla la sangre y lágrimas que han de cultivar un día los fértiles corazones de nuestros hijos. Dispuestos estemos hoy todos a desenvainar nuestras afilados sueños e ideales. Ven y sube en la nube de nuestra poesía soldado hermano, que en el alto reino de la libertad y justicia no hay nada imposible.

Guillermo Estrada

Oakland, CA. a 26 de Noviembre de 2016.

Walls
Carla Valdivia

Walls are put up to divide
Created to keep things apart
Prevent people from entering,
Walls are barriers or boundaries
Isolating people and branding them as intruders.

Why must we put up walls?

People escape their own land to find a better future,
One that they couldn't have.
What prevented Columbus from
Invading the Americas?
And now look at our Patria Grande,
So why do we need boundaries?

Is it to protect people from any threats?
I don't see none.
Is a girl with dreams of a profession a threat?

Is a mother looking for a better future for
her children a threat?
Is that a threat?

Years and years of struggling
and still our people are not wanted,

Labeled as intruders.

Why walls that keep people away?

I don't see no threats.

All my eyes see is a struggling family,
a person seeking rights,
people seeking a better future.

We are not a threat!

Mi piel morena
Carla Valdivia

My brown skin does not determine who I am.
It describes my culture, my ethnicity,
But not my worth.

Mi piel morena
No la juzgues,
No me mires pa' bajo,
No pretendas hacerme
sentir mal por no ser blanca.

If you have brown skin in
America
You are labeled as:
Inferior,
a criminal,
Someone with no future.
People, why the labels?

Listen to this,
A girl of immigrant parents,
born in America
Latina and proud
Her beautiful brown skin has been
tainted with labels.

People do not see an educated woman,
But someone with no future.

If you have brown skin
You do not grow up with opulence,
Society says it's not for you.

Brown skin
Should not be a reason
for inequality and discrimination.

She has an education,
The only expensive gift her parents could give her,
With their sweat and calloused hands.
What a luxury!

Sólo porque no tengo piel blanca
Tengo que aceptar que soy inferior?
Valer menos?

You do not determine who I am or who I will be.
You do not get to say what I can and can't do.
You do not get to choose who is better based on color.

My brown skin is my shield,
makes me stronger a pesar del desprecio.

Mi piel dorada es preciosa.

Es un orgullo ser hija del maíz.

I know my worth,
I know who I am,

Una mujer con piel morena y con un gran futuro!

La voz
Erika Reina

My shoulders hunched and
eyes wondering in hope of acceptance
I continue day after day in search of my voice.

My inner voice is scared to set itself free,
to be hurt,
Judged,
to be vulnerable.

I constantly fight my fear of being who I am.
To not be ashamed of mi acento,
To be okay being different,
To embrace my failures,
To be a proud Latina woman.

To all mi gente, yo sé la dificultad de ser Latinos
in a world where our skin color makes us less than others,

To feel the need to assimilate
If we want to be valued, heard,
Understood.

Pero una cosa les puedo decir,
no se olviden que generacion tras generacion

seguimos aquí,
más fuertes que nunca.

The search for my voice has ended, to
join our movement.

To walk the street,
the same roads that have stripped us from our voices,
Shaking hands and shaking US.

My Identity
Erika Reina

When I see the world,
I see myself outside of it.
I no longer understand
The world I live in.

Veo la Injusticia
happening all around me,
of Mi gente
Pleading and praying
for the right to be,
for a taste of freedom,
Freedom made of
sweat and blisters,
Tears and sacrifice.

I close my eyes,
A nightmare
Of the lost Identity
And lost hope
That Is embedded in them.

I am awoken by the cry of my people,
those who roam the world searching for their souls,

faced with the image of my mother's eye
watching my nightmares haunt me ceaselessly,
Tears,
And
Anger
Is what I am left with.

I turn the lights and all I see is
my reflection.
I hear my heart singing,
I find myself breathing,
I feel my mind thinking.

Silence
Is what my mind screams.
Knowledge is power, but
how far does it take us?

Displaced
Astrid Mejia-Rodriguez

Poverty and war are relentless
preying on the most vulnerable,
Like a lion waiting to pounce
Attacking when least expected.

Poverty and war violently force
people out of their homes,
If they ever had one.
They are left lifeless,
gasping for air.

In despair,
They drift to new roads
ones they've never traveled before
In search of everything they have lost
Uninvited, cold, and hungry
Completely helpless.

They're only told to go back
Where to, exactly?
Everything's been destroyed
Now there's no land to call their own.

My Grandma's Story
Astrid Mejia-Rodriguez

You were never given a chance
your wings cut off before you were able to fly,
born to a mother who you never got to know
and a father who drank his sorrows away.

Drowning in melancholy
Left you to swim on your own,
Raped at twelve years old by a nameless man.

Face so blurry
It all happened in a hurry,
But this moment lasts a lifetime,
Like a broken record

You'll play it over and over again.

Nobody fought for you,
Why would they?

Homeless child, uneducated child wandering about,
Barefoot and broken,

Homeless woman, uneducated woman wandering about,
Every tumble making you more jaded,
Life's knocked you down so many times,

Is it even worth getting up anymore?

You pray every night
Wishing this storm will leave a rainbow,
Heart so fervent on change.

The Moderate Man
James Cogley

Light is leaving my heart
Like protesters marching away from the struggle
Leaving only darkness in their wake.
City lights going out
Square block by square block
I get so angry that the world does not feel what I feel,
Does not beat as I beat.

My vision blocked by blood red capillaries
Brimming with the loathing of the moderate Man,
You die when you accept the things you cannot change!
That's giving up on life for
comfort
Never dawning our neckerchief masks

Because we'd have to take off the ones we already wear.
I turn to you my beloved community
To be greater than the impossible
But there is a sleeping monster I will name
the moderate Man
Who rejects me on my knees because he's more
afraid of a passionate group
Than being alone with his security,

There is little life in the monster and he
is the part of us that is larger.

I take my comfort from knowing change
Needs la Raza
pero no a toda la gente,
Change needs the people but not all the people
And together I will no longer accept those things I cannot
change

For the unacceptable is unacceptable whether or not the
change is feasible.

The Fire And The Rain
James Cogley

They desire our pain
Without the kindling of a scream
But that same heat
Has begun to tear at my soul
And has lit my flame.

In essence:
To complain.

Cuz that's what it is:
Finding what's wrong
And shouting it
No matter
If it's short or long
It's however you sing your song
So long as you burn the lies
Tear the diversion from people's' eyes
And stop giving the world alibis
For the commodity
That consumes and thrills
But check out the oddity
Cuz in actuality it consumes you and
Kills the imagination,

The desire for the purity of you
You with all your excess frills
Your expensive denim jeans
Purses, pussy, pants and other priceless
purposeless things
That are being sold to you,
Destroy what is true
It's not being said so I'll have too
They are like shields in a world of flowers
Blinding you from the only possible true meanings
Towers of truth like love and joy
Like how only human connection can ease our inner
disquiet

So sing with me compañeros,
Don't forget the pain
comes down like the rain
But the secular secluded shields you have on are strong
So you don't have to feel the pelting sting
But look around and see the others
Standing in the monsoon who don't even have an
umbrella!
I'm telling ya the shower is com'n down hard
You never know if it could break your shield
Come crashing through your house window
You know the one,
you look right through it and watch the hurricane go insane

But you sit inside totally lame without even a name larger
than the
illusion of product and gain
Staying inside and tame
Means you can't feel real rain
Can't understand your brothers pain
Because you're shielded by merchandise
The device you use to disconnect and externalize pain
When you should be feeling it
Cuz I disagree with
Eastern philosophy
Desire is the fire that keeps us alive
And lets us know we have to strive.

Suffering is who we are
The sticky tar
That keeps us aware
Of our black despair
And holds us to our past,

Pain is fuel for the fire
And I have become the burning of my desire
To express how our situation is dire,

Profit and greed we're as used to as day or night
Cuz Every single day we go out and fight
To fill our wallets tight

It's our economic traditions that be keeping us thinking it's
right
To separate our purported values of sacrifice by
crucifixions
From our daily nine to five addictions
Commodities are fictions
And capitalism is an affliction.

We must discard the notion
That we are the product of some mathematical quotient
Cuz no equation can inspire love or devotion
So drink your pacifying potion
But dream and beware
For a life sold is the real nightmare

Levántate mi gente,
Levántate ya y canta muerte
murete de vendernos a nosotros mismos
Sing the death of our desire to buy and sell
The intimacy of our very selves

Remember the fire and the pain?
I'm engulfed,

And scorched from exposure
While I scream and seizure
Fuck you leisure
People are dying.

Hearts are breaking
Love is being made
So live without always being afraid
And above all else,
Don't let your heart fade!

Ay palabras!
Guillermo Estrada

Hay palabras que duelen tanto,
Yo no sé.

Como espinas de fuego clavadas
en la carne,
Como carne al fuego clavada
en las espinas.

Hay palabras que pesan tanto,
Yo no sé.

Palabras hechas de odio que
Joroban el alma,
Odio del alma
Convertido en palabras.

Hay palabras que dañan tanto,
Yo no sé.

Mitos malditos que se
vuelven ecos,
Ecos de mitos que
Pronuncia el maldito.

¡Ay Palabras!

Yo no sé,
Yo no sé.

The Soundless School
James Cogley

I can't make history
I only learn it.

Cuz I'm busy being better than the other

To be seen by the teacher
With this knowledge
Like I'm growing
But I can't, I'm at a loss
Cuz when my value is derived
From taking a peek at the test
laying over on the next desk
And defining me, through separation
It's just learning how to be a part of Education's,
segregation.

I gain this knowledge at the cost of my freedom

And the cries of my heart

have no drum on which to beat
Because the structure cultivates defeat.
Education taught me how to be educated
And now I have learned how to be taught
So I sit quiet and speak only when called upon.

Pero mi corazón late,
Late contra este pasivo silencio,
beats against this passive silence
and the student mentality
Where knowledge functions only as means towards self-
congratulations.

Even our questions make us compete
Hands raised to show off insight
Posturing away our ability to unite

The beat dies with my hand raised
The blackboard trying to contain my hate
The classroom is silent even as we speak

For we learn the structure and not the critique

We learn to compete,
To compete,
To compete,
And that makes us weak!

The Word Needs Another
James Cogley

To say it straight
Is one way to illuminate
But a feeling's list
hits like a fist
and cannot seep into your soul's meat
A place to feel and keep
Those feelings which we seek
So in order to satiate your core
I will penetrate with a metaphor:
I often wonder why so many poets hold the environment
Like a sacrament
Spouting about springs
And carrying on about growing things
Using the birds and the bees as similes
And then describe their love like the moon's for the seas

Yes I am confined to metaphor and rhyme
But to express how I need my people
I would not speak of my love in terms of the dove
For as a poet I love the word
More than I love the average passing bird
I need you like a word needs another
Every individual word stands alone
And alone let's cry a guttural moan

As if to say alone I am weak.
Alone I can still stand tall, not meek.

But alone means that I have something for which to seek
Alone as a word I am a secure being
But I want a community to share my meaning
For a word may stand for something
But it is nothing without other words
To show that what it stands for
That at its core a word needs more.

I need you like I need to fill a blank page
Because I need someone to know of my pain,
my rage

There is satiation in your validation
And when I feel caught
Just like I know the page is all I've got
I know you are another knot
At the end of my rope
To give me hope,
Because when I have a few in which to confide
I feel like I have something inside,
Giving me a passion for life
And just as I feel the words inside me
Yearning to be free
So too I feel you inside
Helping to make me free.

Because you develop my identity
For just as the words lift me up and make me who I am
You too ignite my desire to stand
So alone I am a one word man
But with you it's like being poetically grand.

Mi gente grita, But Who Hears Us?

Carla Valdivia

524 years ago our ancestors were stripped of their culture,
land, and dignity.

Assimilated, tortured, raped, killed

Viewed as savages

forced to become civilized,

and the man who started it all has his own holiday.

He is a hero!

!La lucha de mi gente empieza

Por la libertad!

The fight began and victory followed.

Now there's a government of the people,

the land is calm.

No chaos,

until greed and power

spread like a virus.

Corruption and violence take over.

!La lucha de mi gente sigue

Por la paz e igualdad!

My people is forced to leave,

Searching for a better future.

Our governments oppress them,

They just want to breathe.

We leave our roots behind,
to be in the land of the free and home of the brave.

Shouldn't it be the land of the oppressed and home of the
cowards?

Venimos aquí queriendo vivir.
The government incarcerates my people,
Declaring a war on drugs,
Sentencing harsh for a little bit of drugs
but not for a murder.

!La lucha de mi gente continua
Por la justicia!
Pero esa no es la única lucha,
La lucha es estar todos unidos.

Un indio muere
Cada que uno de los nuestros niega su cultura
y para de luchar con nosotros.

Before we used to sing to the spirits,
Now we shout.
Damos nuestro grito de lucha
Que todavía continúa.

Pero ¿quién nos oye?

The World We Live In
Carla Valdivia

Qué tristeza
qué soledad,
¿Qué hicimos para merecer esto?
What reality are we facing?
Can someone wake me up from this nightmare?

Mi gran temor.
I fear death and separation.
Always scared
not knowing if I will see my parents again
or will they be taken away from me,
Arrested,
treated as dangerous criminals
sent back to a forgotten homeland,
to face the corruption and violence they once escaped.

No more sanctuary cities,
He declared.

¡Ese es el líder que vamos a tener!
Un presidente ignorante y privilegiado,
No respeta a la mujer,

Es racista,
Homóforo,
No respeta a nadie.

Promises for a reform and change
Have vanished.
Fear and dread is felt throughout the nation,
A victory should not make people scared and
pessimistic about the future,
La lucha sigue.

I See the fear in my parents' eyes,
Where hope was once seen,
“Do not lose hope”
How do I speak of that
If I do not feel none?

The nation is deeply divided
Shocked to see that many share his beliefs,
When is it going to stop?
When is racism and discrimination going to end?
When can we accept equality for women, LGBTQ,
Social justice for immigrants, and people of color?

Ahora más que nunca tenemos que estar unidos.
Hermanos y hermanas,
¡Juntos en ésta lucha!

Pelear como otros lo han hecho.
¡Si se puede!

History and unity will show us the way.

¡La revolución apenas empezó!

A New Nation
Erika Reina

I am startled by the cry of the wind
that whispers, ¡no más!
I see fear in the eyes of the people
that say, nos han abandonado.

Yo grito, están equivocados.

Cuando marchamos
The floor shakes,
We chant and the world hear us
the sun rises
and the moon glows chanting with us.

I see my parent's eyes and I see a rich history
I feel their pain,
caress their dreams,
I see their hope of
coming to America so I
can have the right to be,
to be educated and be
Seen equal and,
I cry.

They left family and
friends,

their home, their deads.

For What?

To come to a nation that sees us down and
turns its back on us in every direction
not thanking us for making America great again and
being the backbone of America's economy?

So I say,

¡Que se chinguen!

And as long as I live I will embrace my
parent's history,
and I will fall and raise
and will make this nation great again,
with love,
compassion,
and hope.

My Shadow
Erika Reina

My Shadow trembles
my shadow fears
my shadow speaks,
flows like a river
with its innocent blood
drowning with its every grasp of air.
I try to run but can't escape the darkness
It follows and follows

and I am left with a reflection
with my most inner fear.

My shadow cries
my shadow dreams
my shadow hopes,
my shadow sees the sun unable to reach it
it grows to one day feel the warmth of the sun under its
skin
to no longer live in the shadow,

to feel my ancestor's inner strength,
to become my everlasting light.

In Loving Memory
Astrid Mejia-Rodriguez

Father,
The one with the brown skin
that glistens under the sun
Like a diamond,
So bright, almost blinding.

Father,
The one with the broken English
Can't seem to get the words quite right
Your accent made everything sound like a secret code.

Father,
The one with the beetlejuice car
Engine caused more ruckus than an earthquake,
reeking of old jalapeños
a scent I once hated
Now I miss everyday.

Father,
King of magical tea
You made me try all your different flavors
They all tasted the same to me.
Now that you're gone,
I taste the difference.

Father,
Thank you for being my father.

To Break Me
Astrid Mejia-Rodriguez

Try to break my identity,
It only becomes bulletproof.
Stronger than steel,
A powerful shield.

You will not break me.
The more hate you spew
The taller I stand,
Soon or later
You will see me as your equal.

The power of the word is strongly shown in the voices of this group of young poets and students of Holy Names University. They aim to communicate their pain, their protest and their solidarity with others through their poetic expression. It is young people's calling to be responsive, outspoken and brave on what is impacting their community and the world. They are doing their part through the beauty of poetry and their resistance to the social injustices they encounter in life. I hope that the creative path they have enthusiastically initiated at Holy Names will inspire new poets to raise their voices at our institution.

Martivón Galindo, Professor of Latin American & Latino/a Studies and Study Abroad Coordinator at Holy Names University