

La Fuerza

The Literary Magazine of Raíces
Fall 1992



Hampshire College
Amherst, Massachusetts



*They plucked our fruit
They cut our branches
They burned our trunk
But they could not kill our roots*

Committee of United Campaigns,
Guatemala

CONTENTS

◦ Essays ◦

- | | | | |
|---|--|----|--|
| 6 | Crossing La Linea: Discrimination
in 'The Tortilla Curtain'
<i>By Minerva Chávez</i> | 10 | The Great North American Lake
<i>By Johanna J. Camilo</i> |
| 8 | In the Heat of the Action
<i>By Alan D. Flores, II</i> | 12 | The Minority Surplus
<i>By Claudia Milian</i> |
| 13 Life at Hampshire
<i>By Johanna J. Camilo</i> | | | |

◦ Fiction ◦

- | | | | |
|--|--|----|--|
| 16 | The Healer
<i>By Gloria Chacón</i> | 18 | My Sister Rose
<i>By Gloria Chacón</i> |
| 17 | The Smell of Dirty Laundry
<i>By Michelle Marroquín</i> | 19 | The Man, the Cage, and the Birds
<i>By Michelle Marroquín</i> |
| 20 El Camotero
<i>By Michelle Marroquín</i> | | | |

◦ Poetry ◦

- | | | | |
|---|--|----|---|
| 22 | Me Hace Falta
<i>By Hector L. Caraballo</i> | 28 | Voz Bajo Liquido
and other poems
<i>By Gustavo García</i> |
| 23 | La Eterna Historia del Viento
<i>By Hector L. Caraballo</i> | 29 | Through a Distance
<i>By Jorge A. Diaz</i> |
| 24 | I Sing of Pedro
<i>By Andrew Juan Rosa</i> | 30 | Untitled
<i>By Juan Cruz</i> |
| 25 | War Song of the Incas | | |
| 31 500 Years of Genocide
<i>By Gloria Chacón</i> | | | |

Dear Compañeros:

La Fuerza emerges from a collective political, cultural, and social consciousness. These thoughts are put forth in an effort to be heard and acknowledged.

This voice that represents thoughts of frustration, anger, and love, is out to claim our space.

Compañeros, thank you for making this magazine a reality.

We thank our familias and friends for their support and sacrificios.

Siempre en la revolución,



Gloria Chacón
Editor

This issue is dedicated to those who have influenced us through their struggles:

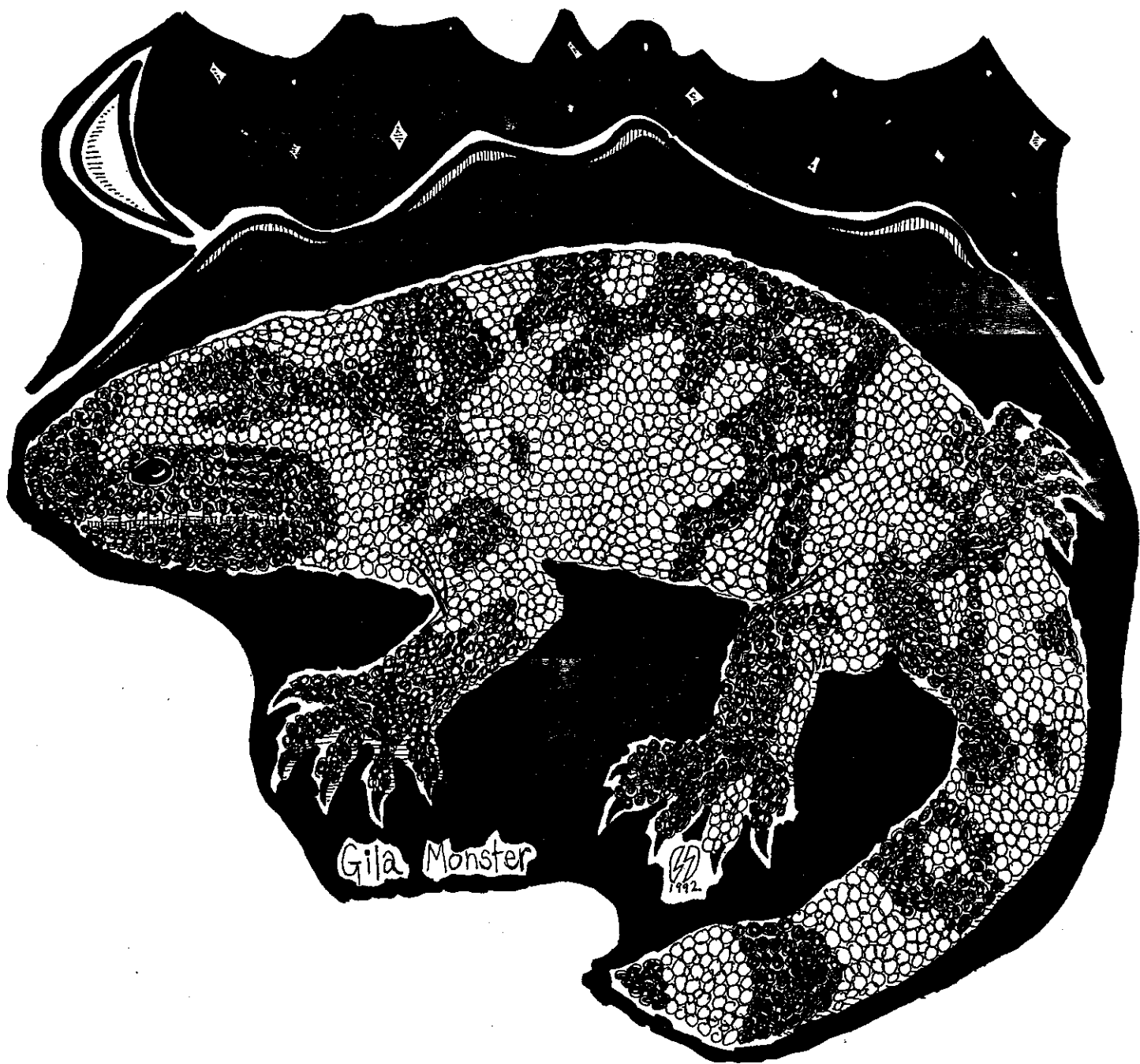
Rigoberta Menchú • Fidel Castro • Pedro Albizu Campos • Simon Bolivar • Oscar Arias • Lolita Lebrón • Oscar Arnulfo Romero • Ché Guevara • Guaironex • Domitilia Barrios de Chungara • Elvia Alvarado • Cuauhtémoc • Sendero Luminoso • Diego Rivera • Elizam Escobar • Gloria Molina • Luis Valdez • Rosario Castellanos • Octavio Paz • Manlio Argueta • Mercedes Sosa • Violeta Parra • Nexahualcoyotl • Miguel Angel Asturias • Dolores Huerta • Rubén Darío • Alicia Partnoy • Reies López Tijerina • Lempira • Francisco Morazán • Camilo Torres • Roque Dalton • Ramon Amaya Amador • Augusto Cesar Sandino • Frida Kahlo • Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz • Farabundo Martí • Eduardo Galeano • Rubén Blades • Isabel Allende • Tilsa Tsuchiya • Jaime Escalante • Celica Cruz • Dylcia Pagan • Cesar Chávez • Moctezuma Xocoyotl • Herman Braun • Gonzalo Cienfuegos • Claribel Alegria • Jorge Luis Borges • Alcides Arguedas • Gabriel García Márquez • Jose Martí • Jorge Icaza • Manuel Gonzalez Zeledón • Adolfo Baquerizo Morena • Tristan Solarte • Augusto Roa Bastos • Mario Vargas Llosa • Cesar Vallejo • Juan Rulfo • Eduardo Acevedo Diaz • Rómulo Gallegos • Horacio Quiroga



My commitment to our struggle
recognizes neither boundaries nor
limits: only those of us who carry
our cause in our hearts are
willing to run the risks.

-- Rigoberta Menchú





Crossing La Linea: Discrimination in 'The Tortilla Curtain'

By Minerva S. Chávez

I hate their stinking badges.

Crossing the border from Mexico to California has never been quite as difficult as it was this past summer. I went to Tijuana, Baja California, with my father, and eight-year-old brother to pick up my tio, who was flying from Guadalajara.

The day was hectic.

We got lost on the way to the airport. It was Sonoran desert hot and we were worried that my tio's papers would not "be in order," or something along those lines . . . even if they are perfectly okay, of course. It wouldn't be the first time.

We started for "TJ" at noon, and didn't find my uncle until 6 p.m. By the time we got to the border inspection, we found it clogged with an endless line of cars. The air conditioner in the car was acting up, so my dad decided to open all the car windows. The desert wind slapped my face, and car exhaust made me choke.

By the time we got to the immigration officer, I was hot, sweaty, grouchy, and nervous. I was hoping for a reasonable officer. Fat chance.

We had crossed the border many

I bet that immigration officer had never had anyone not answer his questions. He acted as if I had defied authority. I had. I'm proud of it.

times. There have been times when I have seen the officers belittle my dad, and were so threatening that they seem on the verge of beating him.

My dad is a person who is very proud of who he is and from where he comes. He was born in Jalisco, Mexico. The moment he receives an insult, he defends himself and his country.

The officer asked to see all the papales from each person in the vehicle. I had warned my dad not to show the officer my birth certificate. I knew that all I had to say was that I was a U.S. citizen.

My dad showed the papers to him anyway. I can't blame him, I guess. But it still made me upset.

The officer browsed briefly through the cards of my uncle, father, and little

brother, but he opened my birth certificate and called my name.

"Me," I said.

"Where do you live?"

"South Gate."

"What school do you go to?"

"Hampshire College," I answered rather dryly.

"Where is your school identification," he insisted.

"I don't have it with me. It's summer time."

He looked at me long and hard, then came around to my side of the car. He gave me another of his looks. His blue eyes dug deep into my soul, not only trying to humiliate me, but questioning my identity as well.

He was getting to me.

I was not in the mood to smile. Let alone kiss his white ass. I knew for a fact I should not do that. After all, I had no need to -- I am a U.S. citizen.

"What grade are you in?" He persisted.

"Second year." My teeth were clenched as I answered his question. *This is the last question I will answer.*

"What do you call the second year in college?" He asked.

"You have my birth certificate in front of you. I am a U.S. citizen. I don't have to answer your dumb questions."

I was fed up. What was this, 20 questions? And such stupid ones, too. All this time I was thinking: *He's only questioning me. He doubts I even attend college. He wants to hear how well I speak his language.*

He grew upset after my last comment, but I succeeded in making him leave me alone. I'm sure the other "wetbacks" behind us in line were happy it would now be their turn to come into this

racist country....

I bet that immigration officer never had anyone not answer his questions. He acted as if I had defied authority. I had, and I'm proud of it.

So what, if I was a smart mouth? All I knew was that I was a U.S. citizen. What good is that, if you are a Latino trying to cross La Linea.

I live in a country that doubts me. It may me because I'm not exactly white, either in race or in skin color.

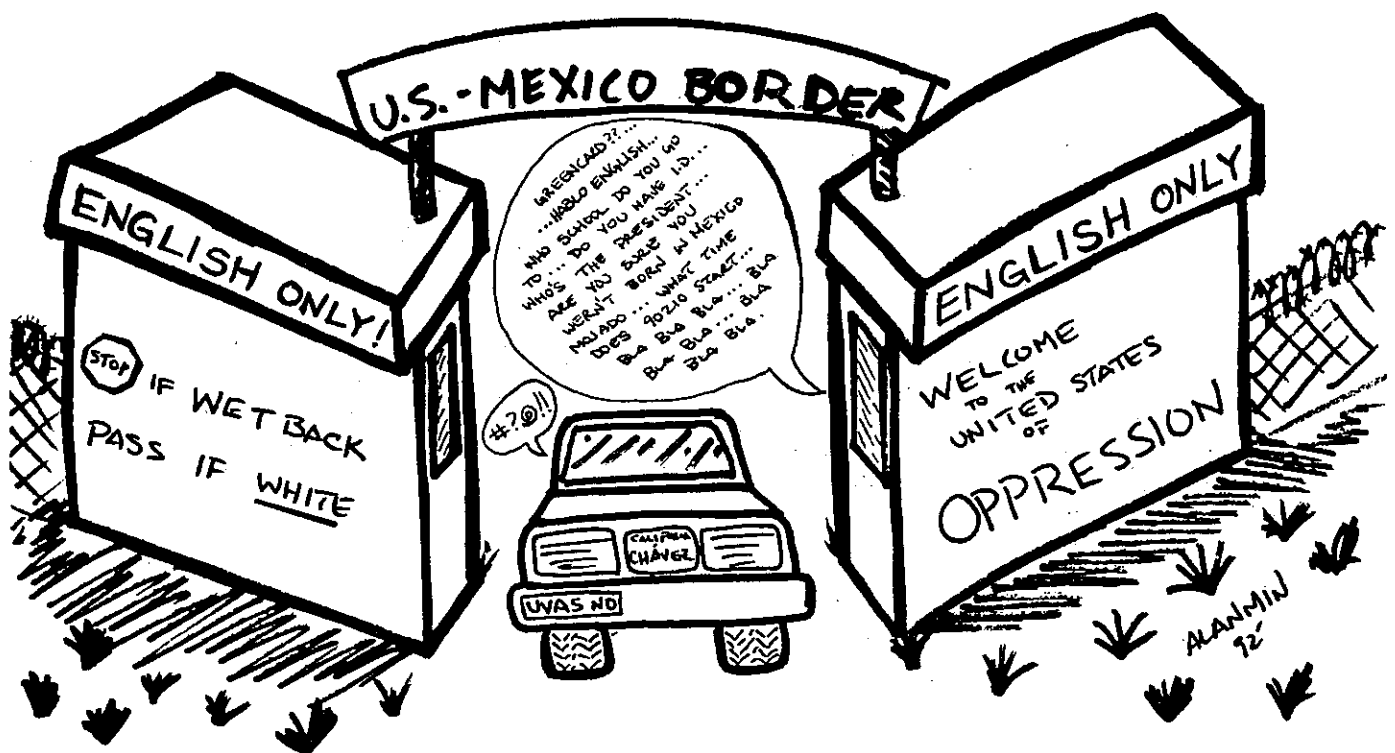
To be perfectly honest, I'm glad I'm not white.

I don't like being discriminated against. I don't like being doubted. I particularly don't like people trying to make me feel inferior, especially whites.

The officer sent us to secondary inspection. There, they made us wait until the badges felt like attending us.

Finally, they searched the car, and gave my uncle special permission to be here for a few weeks.

We were free to go ... home.



In the Heat of the Action

Reflections on the L.A. Riots

By Alan D. Flores, II

University of Massachusetts/Amherst

The blaze shown on television could not compare to the heat of reality.

Who would have imagined that waking up to wish my mother a happy birthday, on April 29, my city would be on fire by nightfall. Total chaos and panic, not to mention fear, were the main feelings instilled in my mind.

The first night of the riots seemed to go on for an eternity. I sat glued in front of the t.v. for hours, changing the news stations. Every channel transmitted the same thing: burning and looting. I could see buildings burning for miles away, and people gathering in the streets of Los Angeles protesting the unfair decision of the jury.

In these people's minds, the injustice that had transpired was not going to be forgotten. These people wanted to send a message to those in power and let them know changes had to be made, now. . . .

I felt scared that night. I didn't want to sleep. I thought I was going to wake up to find the entire city burned. Fortunately, the people gave up the fight and went home -- with intentions to continue their protest the next day.

Day two had arrived, and surprisingly enough, the city was still standing.

Unrest continued to fill the air and another attack was obvious. I went to work for Pizza Hut, feeling nervous about the probability of becoming the next victim of the violence plaguing the city. The image of a truck driver dragged from his truck and beaten to death kept flashing through my mind.

As I drove, I could feel the fear of the people in my community: they were afraid to come out. The small businesses were afraid to open their doors. The windows were boarded with wood. The rioting and looting had begun that morning, and pressure was building.

This day, in comparison to the first, was very different. The people now seemed to have transformed from fighters of a cause, to scavengers in the streets. People of all races roaming Los Angeles in packs breaking down doors and smashing windows to get their hands on everything and anything.

Some may say they were still protesting, but as a person who grew up in the streets, I know that if I had the chance I would have looted as well. My looting would not have been an act of protesting, however, only an act of selfishness. All this chaos may have looked like a fight for justice, but being caught up in the action made one forget what the original purpose was. The reasons one protests were obliterated by the reality of what it takes to survive.

During day three of the riots, a curfew had been established.

The National Guard was called into the area to enforce the curfew and to "keep the peace." It felt and looked like a war zone with tanks and army vehicles driving along the street. The Guard was in full riot gear prepared to do "that," which started this whole fiasco in the first place. Their clubs and guns were being flashed to hold us down like animals, because that is what they

Every channel transmitted the same thing: burning and looting. . . . The injustice that had transpired was not going to be forgotten.

saw us like, animals that needed to be controlled.

The day went on and the looting continued. Except now it fell closer to home. This day in particular, I will never forget. I was standing on the porch outside my house when I spotted a mob of people running in and out of a drug store two blocks away from my house. After they looted, a group of people set fire to the store. I saw it go up in flames.

This particular business was not just another store that had been looted and burned down and aired on television, it was the store that I shopped for Mother's Day, Father's Day, Easter, school supplies, and even for an occasional ice cream cone. But those days were now over. The store burned to the ground and I stood there in awe, watching helplessly.

The people were burning down the memories -- my memories -- as well as the necessities of everyday life. The markets

were burning away and the stores that provided our survival were all being burned to the ground as well.

Do I blame them? I don't know. . . .

As I drove by the store the next day, smoke still rose from the ashes. All that was left was charcoal. Now, the store is a memory. It is unknown if the company plans to rebuild in the area, as is the case with so many of the stores that were affected. The companies say they can't afford the insurance risk, and the small businesses can't afford to start over. When I look back at the whole situation, I wonder if it was all worth it.

Los Angeles is returning to normal. Only now more people are jobless. The aftermath is still there. The fear, the panic, and the chaos are now a thing of the past.

We have been silenced and we have learned to accept -- until the next time a major injustice occurs. Who knows what it could lead to next.



The Great North American Lake

Puerto Rico and Its Colonial Status

By Johanna J. Camilo

It angers me when I see people questioning my identity and that of my country, Puerto Rico.

There is no doubt in my mind: I am Latina, no one can tell me otherwise.

I'm tired of individuals who do not think Puerto Ricans are Latinos.

In questioning this, it appears as if the main goal of these individuals is to divide the Latino community by dismissing Puerto Ricans as "other" Latin Americans. That has already been done by Anglo society, and since Latinos have already been labeled as the "other," there is no need to do the same with our community.

Our loyalty, *nuestra patria*, is in Puerto Rico and not the United States. Our

My country is a U.S. colony.

music, language, and culture are Puerto Rican – not Anglo. Our heritage reflects a mixture of Taino, African, and Spanish influences.

I am a U.S. citizen and while my country is a U.S. colony, it is not by choice. We won independence from Spain and were a free people for five months. In spite of this, the promises of support and freedom by the U.S. government were broken and, once more, Puerto Rico went under the chains of colonization and oppression by force in 1898.

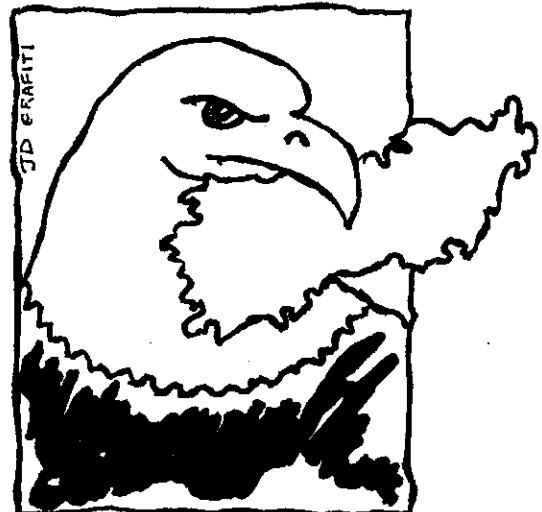
In 1917, Puerto Ricans were "granted" second class North American citizenship. This "citizenship," however, does not go any further than a blue booklet with a coat of arms that does little to help the economy or the people in the island. The minimum pay in Puerto Rico, for

example, is ten times lower than the minimum pay in the poorest state in the United States.

What is more, we cannot vote in U.S. presidential elections. In spite of this, our children are drafted to wars in which we have no say. We have no voice in Congress. Yet the U. S. government can exploit and destroy our ecology (e.g. Culebra and Vieques); and use our women for contraceptive experimentation (e.g. forced sterilization).

Becoming a state is definitely not Puerto Rico's dream. Historically, there have been strong movements for independence. Unfortunately, these attempts have failed due to intervention efforts of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). At present, more than 35 Puerto Ricans are political prisoners. This is illegal under the U.S. Constitution. Perhaps, it is an exception to the right of freedom of speech guaranteed in the First Amendment.

Simply stated, Puerto Rico shares the same dilemmas of poverty and oppression found in many Latin America countries. We should, therefore, act in unity and solidarity.



Christopher Columbus

Second-rate Genoan Explorer Who Couldn't Tell
The Difference Between India and The Americas.



SEAN SULLIVAN

WANTED

FOR INTRODUCING TO THE NEW WORLD:
Ethnocentrism, Xenophobia, Racism, Genocide,
Pestilence, Colonialism, Capitalism, Exploitation
of Indigenous Peoples, Ecological Rape, Gynephobia,
Heterosexist Gender Constructions,
Bad Eating Habits, and Worthless and Insulting
Parades in Major U.S. Cities.

Please return (the land, not the man)
to the original peoples of North, Central,
and South America.

The Minority Surplus

... Same as It Ever Was

"They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way,
eye me curiously or compassionately,
and then instead of saying,
How does it feel to be a problem?
they say,
I know an excellent colored man in my town. . . .
Do not these . . . outrages make your blood boil?
At these, I smile, or am interested,
or reduce boiling to a simmer,
as the occasion may require.
To the real question,
How does it feel to be a problem?
I answer seldom a word.'
— W.E.B. Du Bois

By Claudia Milian

The comment uttered by my Hampshire acquaintance during the summer was beyond my comprehension — almost.

"Don't you realize," he said, "that white people at Hampshire fear you because you *only* hang out with 'Hispanics?'"

My clearly-dazed face simply replied: "What?" Naturally, he did not have to reiterate the widely-circulated sentiment I had heard. . . . If anything, my appellation was with the absurd and not-so-well-packaged terror by white students of the "Other(s)."

On the surface, the factors considered for minorities who have friendships together may appear to be an issue of pigmentation and stereotypes. In actuality, however, the fear might lie with the notion that people of color may entrench themselves with the current system and thereby displace the existing power structure.

But there are just a few of us to begin with, that the idea itself is far-fetched.

In spite of the numbers (whether high or low), the groups of students of color

that roam the campus together begin to actually look like a surplus.

In the eyes of those who have never had any contact with the "Other," this exemplifies danger. The "clique of color" suddenly becomes "too many," "too threatening," and "too exclusive."

That, however, is not the situation for the majority of students on campus. Take, for example, every day occurrences, so obvious and customary, that they seldom result in discomfort — for whites, at least. The fact that whites are also capable of roaming the campus in groups, without being called separatists. The fact that the great majority of classes have a high white student population and members of that community are not "celebrated" or stereotyped with comments such as "My 'Hispanic' maid cleans so well." And the reality that they can also eat in the dining commons together and not be eyed curiously, not to mention that they can speak their language at any given time, without being accused of speaking in codes.

If separatism by students of color from whites was, in fact, the case, one must then take into account the sacrifices of those students who have left the security of

their family, language, culture, and neighborhood behind to be educated -- and possibly absorbed -- into the white educational system. This is easily overlooked, though, as the only issue that appears to have any relevance is the "visibility" of the silent and invisible "Others" when they begin to create or occupy any space.

The notion of exclusivity or

"surplus" by students of color is not subversive or reactionary and therefore should not even be viewed as fearful. Students, after all, seek companionship in individuals with whom they identify the most. The acknowledgment of this universal factor, then, could eventually result in the elimination of the threatening idea that one person of color is the same as "all of them."

Life at Hampshire

93 Percent White . . . Why?

By Johanna J. Camilo

Today I saw a sign that said "93 percent white . . . Why?"

Yesterday, I cried my life away until the tears almost formed a sea and my body was numb and dry, as my skin from the beatings it receives when I go outside to the world of white, the slapping wind, the winter of snow, the bareness of trees. . . .

I came back to my room today, no messages, no phone calls, no letters, and an empty bed. Four white walls and my father and mother in my head telling me not to cry. I've got to be strong because it tears their souls to see water drops rolling down my cheeks.

It's okay. . . . It's okay. . . . It's okay. . . . I guess.

I have been talking more Spanish than usual, more than what people could

understand, or tolerate. I guess I'm just homesick, and trying to remind myself constantly of being *me* --Gotta make a change, Gotta make it fast, Gotta make it happen -- but there's no time, no space, no strength.

It's okay. . . . It's okay. . . . It's okay. . . . I guess.

I haven't seen the sun in about three weeks, and even when I see it, it doesn't touch my skin. It's like the people here. They look at you, yet they're far away. Talk to you, yet make no sense. . . .

I think I'm dying.

I think they're killing my brain.

I think I'm a good-for-nothing --

Or nothing is where I'm at --

I guess no one cares: It's really okay.

It's okay. . . . It's okay. . . . I guess.



Why some people be mad at me sometimes

*they ask me to remember
but they want me to remember
their memories
and i keep on remembering
mine.*

Lucille Clifton, *Next*



The Healer

By Gloria Chacón

*The rain is pouring outside, kissing, sliding, and falling off the brownish leaves.
Wise trees stay still listening for the whispers of the wind.
Tiny raindrops remind me of my own tears —
now that they have dried and left me behind to remember myself . . .*

A thick layer of ice-colored sky creeps up the white and blue business buildings. Today's evening is strangely remote and gray. The wide city streets are decongested which is unusual for downtown. These roads which I have passed through time and time again are empty of cars except for a few public transportation buses. A confined little space forces me close to the entrance steps of the blue bus. The bus is crowded with young men in their dark, old, factory clothes. Older round senoras with empty lonche plastic bags sigh at the end of the day. Tired and somber expressions rest around their brown eyes. So many faces and bodies hide the bus driver's profile—it's impossible to see it even if you strained your eyes. Bus stop after bus stop is crowded with people de todas clases. My left hand gradually gets tired from clutching to the mirror-like silver hand rails as incoming passengers keep brushing me by with their bodies, while they move to the back leaving traces of their odor and heaviness with me. The bus drives off through the lonely streets of Downtown. In the next few bus stops I try moving further down the back of the bus, awkwardly stepping on people's feet. I stare blankly and try to remember where I was supposed to be going. . . . I'm thinking hard, but as always everything looks familiar when I'm lost. We passed through the Good Samaritan Hospital and halted at the next stop where many people seem to have just gotten off work. Many lunch trucks were still parked along the sidewalks of Wilshire and Valencia streets. A pregnant woman with a huge pointy belly steps in and I feel nauseous and desperate to get out.

Suddenly, there is commotion among the passengers. The pregnant woman fell. People start rushing out of the bus. I feel a strong pull on my arm which drags me out to the side of the bus stop where they have dragged her. The bus dashes off as if fleeing the accident and I am left all alone with this pregnant woman who appears to be hurting pretty bad. I looked all around me and found no one. The vastness of the gray skies was the only presence at that point. An acute feeling of anguish engulfed me and all I could do was hold my abdomen first before trying to bring her head up. I looked into those awesome onyx-colored eyes and she said: "I dreamed you, so you can heal me."

The Smell of Dirty Laundry

By Michelle Marroquín

I am driving through Beautiful Virginia Rain, and memories are pouring in as fast as those drops splash on the windshield. Remember the time I went to that girl's "home?" Daughter of an old grinning mother with enormous eyes and curly hair that stuck to her head like paste. Your mother worked for that Chinese family one house down and across. Remember how we used to play in the streets? She watched us when she swept the sidewalk. Sometimes she wouldn't let us play, insinuating with crude jokes and laughing with her rotten yellow teeth. (Didn't we ever play in my house? Or had we at that age already "learned" that we were not equal and free to be friends because you were a maid's daughter?) I don't quite remember your face, only your short, frizzy hair divided into two pony tails and your golden skin. Your skin was soft, gold-brown in between the scars, of course. You didn't seem like your mother's daughter at all. Her skin was wrinkled and white.

I remember the first time I saw your body. You showed me the thick scabs all over your legs and back. I didn't understand how they'd gotten there. That was the day you invited me over to watch las novelas with your mother. I left my front door open because I thought we wouldn't be long. But once in the maid's room, the smell of dirty laundry and a different people transformed my world. I don't remember how we passed our time or how long it had been. Eventually I wandered back home. I was met at the front door by my mother and father. They screamed where had I been for so long, why had I left the door open, they thought I'd been kidnapped. I was so shocked I didn't know what to say. My father pulled my pants down on the goddamned sidewalk and spanked me. It didn't end there. He left me, threatening to get his belt. Through my blurry eyes, I turned to see if you were still there. I saw your mother clutching you, peering through the door looking at me and grinning.

My Sister Rose

By Gloria Chacón

It was the first time Elizabeth was set apart from her sister, Rose. Ever since Elizabeth was aware of her sister, they had never separated. First, Rose came to her in magical dreams, then her existence permeated every breath Elizabeth took, the walls of her room, and her heart.

The more she pondered about Rose the faster the four grey walls seemed to confine and exasperate her. Elizabeth kept wondering why these evil people, dressed foolishly in grey gowns with matching hats, forbade her to see Rose. Every day she tormented herself with the same question, "Where is she now?" It was all too cruel, she thought. Why did she have to be kept away from the only person that understood and loved her? All these questions tortured Elizabeth's poor unstable soul, which withered every day as a forgotten blue iris. She constantly repeated to herself that there had to be a way to communicate with her beloved sister. Elizabeth stared blankly at the four grey walls, when she was interrupted by Rose's distant echoes: a letter . . . a letter . . . which then faded into soft whispers.

The echoes were an omen for her to write to her sister. In her confusion she could not understand why she had not thought of writing the letter before. But, Elizabeth didn't know what to write other than, "I love you" and "I miss you." She decided to write to Rose anyway. *Yes, I do need a beginning.* She started with the simple salutation, "Dear Rose:" then, "Do you remember the poem I sent to you in that birthday card, the one from Emily Dickinson? The one that says: 'Love is all we know of love.'"

As her thoughts ceased, purple memories flashed again and again through her turbulent mind. She felt an acute pain as she breathed the noisome stench of tranquilizers. Elizabeth sighed, placed her paper and pen by her side and stared at the four suffocating, grey, walls. She gazed at the one small glass window; motionless she sat, until she had an accurate perspective of the people outside her room. She kept vigil until everyone of them turned into frivolous, grey, specks.

A faint smile painted itself on her mouth as she rejoiced in her cunning. It had taken her months but she had managed to conceal from them the small, ominous object. She gathered the letter and continued writing: "Well, here I send this part of me." Tears flowed from her small, black eyes as she reached under the mattress for a grey paper clip. As soon as she managed to distort the paper clip to suit her purposes she proceeded to pierce her skin. Elizabeth's heart begun to swell as a chill forced its way through her insides. The ceremony begun as she delicately smeared the sacred red liquid on the white letter. Elizabeth then stood up straight after sealing the envelope which contained a solitary address, and then placed it on top of a decaying altar composed of hundreds of solitary, brown, envelopes.

The Man, the Cage, and the Birds

By Michelle Marroquin

I remember this old man (is he still around?) who stands at the corner of my street in his pijamas, waiting. The rose bush in his patio is so enormous that red and pink rose petals flutter all over that side of the street. I always saw children playing there. The children I see now are the same ones I saw when I was their age; they have not grown at all. Two little girls with miniskirts, zapatos de charol, a scooter, and a little brother who looks at me without talking. I don't have anything to say to him either.

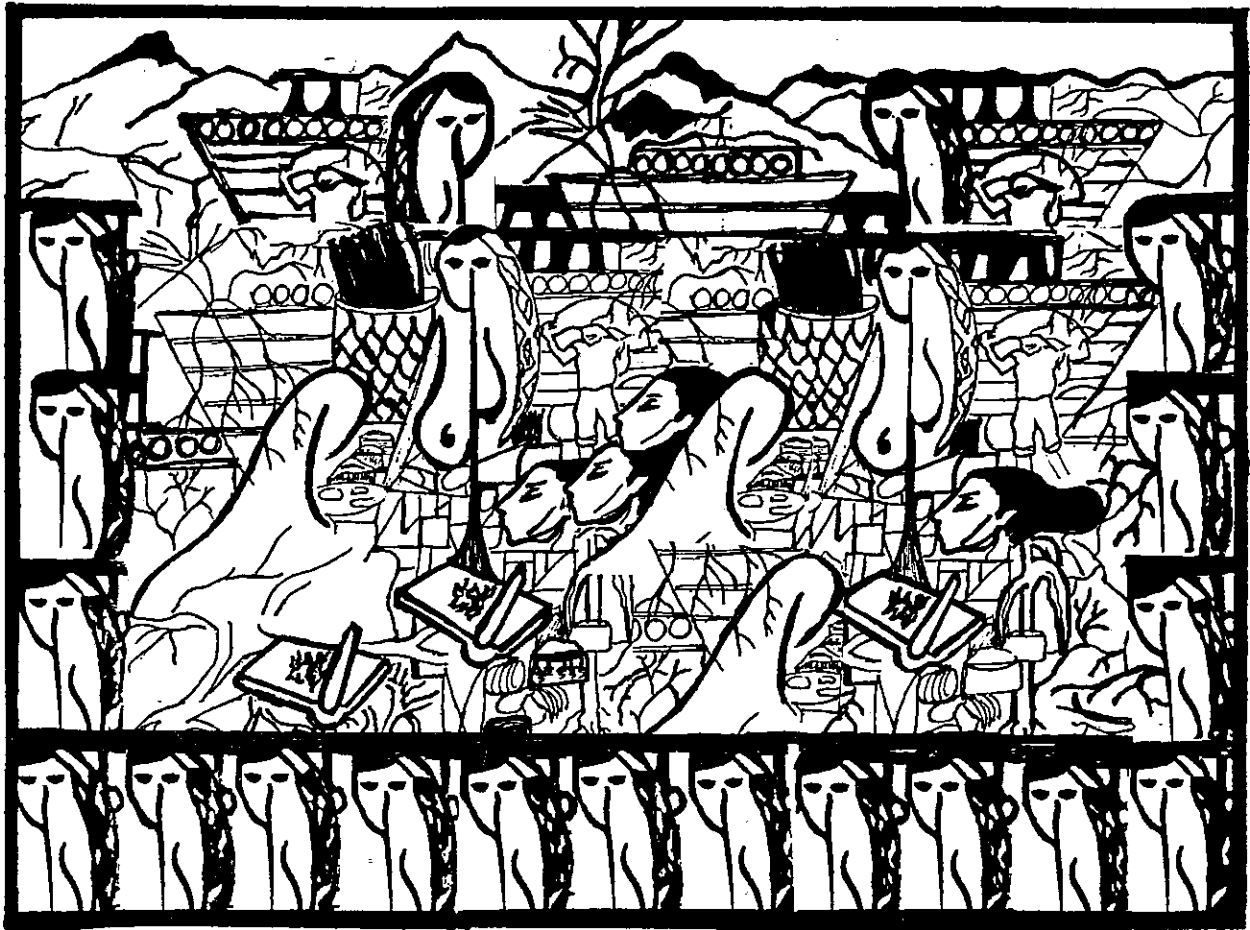
I always wonder what the old man is waiting for. White hair raised by the wind, he stands very still. Perhaps he is listening to all those birds who love his rose bush. Passing under a thick tree right in front of his house, I can hear them tangled in the branches, screeching. He stands motionless, so I cross the street and see him from the side. There are so many cages in his patio, suspended by strings at awkward angles. So he catches birds, that's why he stands so still. But how does it work? Are the cages bird feeders that will slam down on a bird as soon as it enters? How many gray city birds has he caught already? And why are so many lured to that corner of the street?

One of the children is standing over his tricycle gaping at me. One of the children is gone. I see the old man bending over a cage. He has caught something and he isn't letting it go. I hurry up my step. I'm just a few houses from home. One little girl is trying her luck on a scooter and the little boy with his mouth open keeps looking at me. A chilly wind blows by. I got home just before the rain.

El Camotero

By Michelle Marroquín

All kinds of people walked through our street. It was only one block long, but it was my whole world. The house in front, one over to the left, housed Germans. They had three daughters with names I couldn't pronounce, each one and a half years apart. My sister and I would sit behind our fence, they would clutch the bars of their gate, and we would hurl insults at each other. Sharon and I would say all the bad words we could think of in English, and they would do the same in German. Later we found out they knew English, however, we didn't know any German until we became friends with them. Someone walking down the middle of the street, amused by the ape-like scene, would have been caught in the cross-fire of foreign insults. And plenty of people did walk through our little one block street: El cortinero, el ropa-vejero, e'l de los periódicos viejos, el camotero, la tortillera (que traía maíz azul del campo) y el que afilaba cuchillos. Este se anunciaba con un chiflido que lo distinguía de los demás, y cuando se bajaba para un cliente o alguna novia del vecindario, convertía su bicicleta en su taller. La volteaba y le colocaba una cinta y una rueda de metal; frotaba los cuchillos y las tijeras de las amas de casa contra la piedra, sacándoles filo. Cada ambulante tenía un chiflido o un llanto que lo distinguía de los demás. El más bien conocido era el "*Periodico Viejo!*" pero sin duda el más nostálgico era el llanto del camotero. Mi calle era demasiada chica como para que pasara con su carrito de camotes calientes, pero se le oía pasar por la calle perpendicular a la mía. Siempre aparecía al atardecer, y yo lo oía alejarse poco a poco. Ya par cuando se oía apenas un murmullo, la noche estaba de color azul marino, y era hora de ir a la cama. Siempre pasaba después de la merienda, y por eso mi familia nunca compro camotes. Quizas por eso se me hace su llanto el más nostálgico de todos, así como si entre las calles aullaba por una novia perdida, o quizás por la novia que nunca tuvo.



Me Hace Falta

La luz de la luna
adorando la montaña.

La cara de esa vieja
brillando, con las arrugas
de tiempo.

Cada linea testamento
de la vida de una obrera.

Fijandose de la maleza desde
su mecedora en la marquencina.

Esta mujer con cara de india-africana,
africana-india
lo empezó.

Pelo largo y undoso fluyendo
desde la corona como
una mar negra,
lo empezó.

Ojos prietos y duros, llenos de luz
con la sabiduria de los tiempos,
lo empezó.

La matriz de esta mujer
medio el nacimiento de un
nuevo tiempo,
lo empezó.

Esta es la Eva de mi vida,
de mi mundo,
Bisabuela.

Hector L. Caraballo
Amherst College

La Eterna Historia del Viento

Oigo algo en el viento
Me estan hablando.

¿Como puede ser?
¿Desde cuando habla el viento?

¡Escuchen!
¡Escuchen!

¿Los oye?

¡Como no!

El viento tiene una voz áspera,
carga las palabras de mis abuelos,
carga las letras de mis pasado,
carga la historia para ellos que no
tienen una historia,

Ellos que perdieron su propia historia en el
viaje y en las grapas de opresion.

El viento es eterno.

Cuando suena entre las ramas de los árboles,
siento su poder, Viento.
Siento El Poder,
y cuando estoy con los de abajo,
el Viento me habla,
y me mantiene.

La eternidad de la historia habla por el viento.
El Taíno. Agüeybana.
El Africano. Shangó.
Eternamente en el Viento.
Eternamente unido.

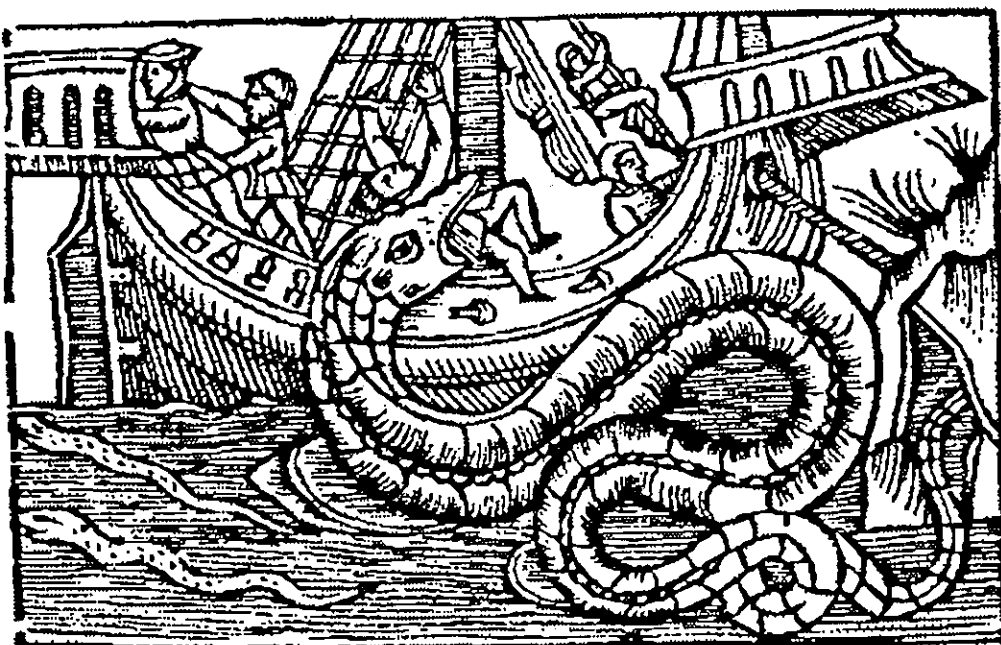
Hector L. Caraballo
Amherst, College

I Sing of Pedro

(Through the eyes of the poet Etheridge Knight)

By Andrew Juan Rosa

And, yeah, brothers, while white amerika sings about the unsinkable molly brown (who was hustling the titanic when it went down) I sing to thee of Pedro the stoker who was hip enough to flee the fucking ship and let the white folks drown with screams on their lips (jumped his brown ass into the dark sea, Pedro did, broke free from the straining steel). Yeah, I sing of Pedro and how the millionaire banker stood on the deck and pulled from his pocket a million dollar check saying Pedro, Pedro save poor me and I'll give you all the money a spic like you needs. How Pedro looked at the money and then at the sea and said jump in the muthafucka and swim like me. And Pedro swam on, Pedro swam on. How the banker's daughter ran naked on the deck with her pink tits trembling and her pants round her neck screaming Pedro, Pedro save poor me and I'll give you all the cunt a spic like you needs. How Pedro said now cunt is good and that's no jive, but you got to swim not fuck to stay alive. Then Pedro swam past a preacher afloat on a board crying save me spic in the name of the Lord. How the preacher grabbed Pedro's arm and broke his stroke -- how Pedro pulled his shank and cut the preacher's throat -- and Pedro swam on -- all alone. And when the news hit the shore that the titanic had sunk Pedro was up in Spanish Harlem damn near drunk and dancing in the streets. Yeah, damn near drunk and dancing in the streets.



War Song of the Incas

We will drink from the skull of the traitor
And from his teeth a necklace make.
Of his bones we will make flutes,
Of his skin a drum.
Then we will dance.

(This text appears in Eduardo Galeano's *Memory of Fire*.)





Manoquin 92



Voz bajo liquido

*Rio, corriendo sobre curvas
ves tiempo multiplicar.
En cielo, arbol, y pierdas
minutos acaban de empezar.
Sales de un punto sin nombre.
Sigues tu misma agua.
Llenas a la orilla del horizonte
y oyes tu unica lengua.
La noche cae en mi espalda,
aquietando el frio con obscuridad.
Tu sonido entra
y jala mi corazon de su libertad.*

Gustavo García

La sorpresa de cada noche

*La luz subito
alumbra la segunda calle
en un pedazo
de un segundo.
Sale en una rafaga que asusta gatos durmiendo
en cajas.
Alumbra las nucas de hombres y mujeres
acostados en
el parque.
Cae en la cascara de una naranja,
que cae a la mano de alguien caminando.
Al pelar la fruta,
su paso se pone despacio.
El sabor llena la boca con jugo de arbol y
sonrisa
y de la sorpresa de la noche.*

Gustavo García

La sombra

*En un encuentro de un año,
entre momentos exactos,
te hablo.
A traves de las millas te hablo.
Buscando te hablo.
Y mis palabras no caen a tu piel.
Y los elementos te obscurecen.
Sigo bajo la noche
afilada de piedra y estrella.
Cruzo arboles fieles
y por un monton de frutas verdes.*

*Frutas que no saborean
labios humanos.
Azucar que no sera alimentado
por el apetito de deseo.
Un monton de poesia,
caida en la noche,
que quedara silencioso
bajo la sombra
de tu hacienda.*

Gustavo García

Through a Distance

*Humid nights that make memories pour
Like nostalgic rains of a parted love,
Tears that are shed now as easily
As the smiles and giggles that come so easily
When we were together.*

*Looking out the window from the inside,
To the outsider looking in, a paradise,
But to the insider trapped,
A hellish world of suffering,
Looking to escape, to find the self within the other.*

*I sit by the window, I've removed the screen
That keeps out the unwanted,
Memories
And dare I face the reality that
As I think of you and see you
I cannot feel
The warmth of your kisses
The sweetness of your soft, nurturing lips.
The same moon that looked upon us with envy,
Now overwhelms,
And I lower my blinds to hide the shame of these lonely nights.*

*El aire caliente que una vez molestó,
en el paraíso del sol,
Ahora ventéa trayendo con el las dulces memorías
De las noches que pasamos juntos.
Y poco a poco te extraño, y lentamente
Las lágrimas corren bajo mi rostro
Y las dejo en paz porque se que estoy llorando por ti,
Porque te extraño y te quiero.
Jorge A. Diaz*

*My steps are careful and subtle
Like the fingertips of a violin player
Running accross imaginary frets --*

*The notes
The sounds*

*The sound
My steps*

*Louder and darker
rising and falling
Like a native woman with a pail of water on her head
spilling notes of unbalance*

Juan Cruz

500 Years of Genocide

By Gloria Chacón

1492-1992 and I am still alive. . . . Indian blood rushes
angrily through my veins -- as you celebrate my
ancestors' pain. 500 hundred years of resistance and
No! I will never die.

