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HERITAGE SPANISH LANGUAGE CONTEST



Jury Accessit Prize

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La poesía confundida

La poesía que sale de mis labios
está confundida,
no sabe ni qué idioma habla.
My tongue moves one way
while my brain is hosting a
dance
between two lovers
and two rivals:
el español y el inglés.
No saben bailar juntos;
se les enredan los pies
while my tongue moves,
confused,
because it's been colonized
twice.

This poem, "Confused Poetry," represents the struggle and resistance of your mother tongue while you're learning and using your second language. That resistance is also the resistance against the extinction and replacement that are common when trying to assimilate into other cultures. The poem is a confusion in itself since you won't be able to read it if you don't speak both Spanish and English. But even if you do, that doesn't mean you will be able to understand it.

At the end I added that my tongue has been colonized twice because my bilingualism is the product of both colonization and imperialism. Bilingualism is a great thing, but I also like to recognize the truth and I like to give a voice to that part of history that has been silenced. Both languages, Spanish and English, were forced as a way of assimilation, and since then they have been considered superior to others as well. With my poem I hope to bring another perspective about those languages.

El bilingüismo/ Bilingualism

My Spanish tastes like
mangoes and horchata
and when I speak it
my tongue
moves
like a dancer
of tangos and bachata...

Thinking that it has a place in this world,
my Spanish changes rules like Cortázar
and makes art like Frida Kahlo.

But every now and then
my Spanish stays at home sick,
building up memories of la patria.

Pero mi español también se alegra cuando piensa en el inglés,
el cual sabe a frambuesa y calabaza
y cuando lo pronunció los adjetivos danzan
al revés...

Pensando que ocupa un lugar en este mundo, mi inglés es educado
y le gusta leer a Audrey Lorde
y hacer arte como Alex Gray,
pero de vez en cuando
mi inglés se siente triste como La Llorona
porque piensa en el español
y en su patria,
que se le quedó en casa.

El arte de ser inmigrante/ The Art of Being an Immigrant

My Spanish means more than
a second language.
In fact, it's my main one.

La poesía del inmigrante
trasciende lenguas y barreras.

Con sus distintas lenguas,
afiladas como cuchillos,
están dispuestas a luchar por
sus ideales, por sus carreras,
por sus familias.

La poesía del inmigrante carga
con un compromiso colectivo;
tira los estereotipos al suelo
y anda con pies cansados
de tanto correr.

La poesía del inmigrante está
desvelada
y cansada de tener que
justificar su existencia.
Tiene mucha hambre por los
temas que la invaden
la pobreza y la tristeza.

Pero la poesía del inmigrante es
luchadora, capaz,
y no se rinde
jamás.

My Spanish is more than a second language, in fact it is my main one and with this poem I wanted to open a door to discuss that. In addition to heritage students, there are also immigrant students who represent what being bilingual means. I wanted to add that my poetry and the poetry of so many immigrants has great value since it has the privilege and the responsibility to give voices to our communities. Being an immigrant is an art in itself, a struggle in itself; it has beauty in itself. Often times, when we talk about diversity, multiculturalism, and multilingualism, we somehow and ironically manage to exclude immigrants' voices. I am here to say that my voice has been broken, silenced, and hidden. I'm also here to say that my accent is strong and loud and proud

In this poem (left), I wanted to express the bittersweet feeling of being between cultures. I wanted to give personification to the languages I speak because I feel somehow as if they are their own personae. I first included some of the fruits and tastes characteristic of each culture. I also included some of my favorite artists in both cultures, because being bilingual expands your knowledge since you get to explore different views and styles. I also made languages feel both happiness and sadness because that's exactly what an immigrant feels. In matters of structure, the second poem (right) has both Spanish and English, it pretends to be a translation of each but we know that things get lost in translation, in this case, things get lost from culture to culture. But at the same time, other characteristics get added.