**I Am Joaquin**  
by Rodolfo Corky Gonzales

About the author: Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzáles was a Mexican American boxer, poet, and political activist. He convened the first-ever Chicano youth conference in March 1969, which was attended by many future Chicano activists and artists

Yo soy Joaquín,  
perdido en un mundo de confusión:  
I am Joaquín, lost in a world of confusion,  
caught up in the whirl of a gringo society,  
confused by the rules, scorned by attitudes,  
suppressed by manipulation, and destroyed by modern society.  
My fathers have lost the economic battle  
and won the struggle of cultural survival.  
And now! I must choose between the paradox of  
victory of the spirit, despite physical hunger,  
or to exist in the grasp of American social neurosis,  
sterilization of the soul and a full stomach.  
Yes, I have come a long way to nowhere,  
unwillingly dragged by that monstrous, technical,  
industrial giant called Progress and Anglo success….  
I look at myself.  
I watch my brothers.  
I shed tears of sorrow. I sow seeds of hate.  
I withdraw to the safety within the circle of life —  
MY OWN PEOPLE  
I am Cuauhtémoc, proud and noble,  
leader of men, king of an empire civilized  
beyond the dreams of the gachupín Cortés,  
who also is the blood, the image of myself.  
I am the Maya prince.  
I am Nezahualcóyotl, great leader of the Chichimecas.  
I am the sword and flame of Cortes the despot  
And I am the eagle and serpent of the Aztec civilization.  
I owned the land as far as the eye  
could see under the Crown of Spain,  
and I toiled on my Earth and gave my Indian sweat and blood  
for the Spanish master who ruled with tyranny over man and  
beast and all that he could trample  
But…THE GROUND WAS MINE.  
I was both tyrant and slave.  
As the Christian church took its place in God’s name,  
to take and use my virgin strength and trusting faith,  
the priests, both good and bad, took–  
but gave a lasting truth that Spaniard Indian Mestizo  
were all God’s children.  
And from these words grew men who prayed and fought  
for their own worth as human beings, for that  
GOLDEN MOMENT of FREEDOM.  
I was part in blood and spirit of that courageous village priest  
Hidalgo who in the year eighteen hundred and ten  
rang the bell of independence and gave out that lasting cry–  
El Grito de Dolores

**A Chicano Poem**

by Lorna Dee Cervantes

They tried to take our words,

Steal away our hearts under

Their imaginary shawls, their laws,

Their libros, their “Libranos señor”s.

No more. They tried to take

Away our Spirit in the rock, the Mountain,

The Living Waters. They tried to steal

Our languages, our grandmothers’ pacts,

Our magma cartas for their own serfs.

They razed the land and raised a Constitution,

Declared others 3/5ths a human being,

Snapped shackles, cut off a foot,

Raped our grandmothers into near mute

Oblivion. They burned the sacred codices

And the molten goddesses rose anew

In their flames. They tried to silence a

Nation, tried to send The People back

To the Four Corners of the world. They drew

A line in the sand and dared us to cross it,

Tried to peel off our skins, Xipe Totec

Screaming through our indigenous consciousness.

They tried to brand “America” into our unread

Flesh, the skull and crossbones flying at

Half-mast. They tried to put their eggs in

Our baskets, tried to weave the Native

Out of us with their drink and drugs, tried to

Switch their mammy-raised offspring, beaded and

Unshaven, as the colorless pea under our mattresses

In a cultural bait and switch, hook and bait.

They tried to take our words,

Give us the Spanish translation for

“Pain,” serve us the host of fallow fields on a

China plate, stripped us of the germ and seed,

Fed us in a steady diet of disease and famine.

Where is the word for tomorrow to the dead?

When is our kingdom come? They claim our

Reclamations; our reparations, a thing of our

Imaginations. I discover this truth

To be self-evident: In the beginning

We were here.

I declare us here today

And speaking.

**To Live in the Borderlands means you**

**BY GLORIA ANZALDUA**

**To live in the borderlands means you**

are neither hispana india negra espanola

ni gabacha, eres mestiza, mulata, half-breed

caught in the crossfire between camps

while carrying all five races on your back

not knowing which side to turn to, run from;

To live in the Borderlands means knowing that

the india in you, betrayed for 500 years,

is no longer speaking to you,

the mexicanas call you rajetas, that denying the Anglo

inside you

is as bad as having denied the Indian or Black;

Cuando vives en la frontera

people walk through you, the wind steals your voice,

you’re a burra, buey, scapegoat,

forerunner of a new race,

half and half-both woman and man, neither-a new

gender;

To live in the Borderlands means to

put chile in the borscht,

eat whole wheat tortillas,

speak Tex-Mex with a Brooklyn accent;

be stopped by la migra at the border checkpoints;

Living in the Borderlands means you fight hard to

resist the gold elixir beckoning from the bottle,

the pull of the gun barrel,

the rope crushing the hollow of your throat;

In the Borderlands

you are the battleground

where enemies are kin to each other;

you are at home, a stranger,

the border disputes have been settled

the volley of shots have scattered the truce

you are wounded, lost in action

dead, fighting back;

To live in the Borderlands means

the mill with the razor white teeth wants to shred off

your olive-red skin, crush out the kernel, your heart

pound you pinch you roll you out

smelling like white bread but dead;

To survive the Borderlands

you must live sin fronteras

be a crossroad