

My Accent

by Carolina Xique

My accent

Molds around English

Like I'm holding

Ice cubes

In my mouth.

Cold,

Hard

English language

Painfully stinging,

Watering down

The thick, warm richness

Of my tongue.

My accent

Is not the smack

Of cacophonous consonants,

Or the over-pronounced sounds

Of English

That butchers

And slices

And dices

And degrades

My language

Until there is no culture

To be found,

“Tortilla,”

“Pueblo,”

“Hermosa Beach,”

“Marina Pacifica,”

“San Francisco.”

My accent

Is the gentle touching

Of the top of my mouth,

Like an embrace from *mi madre*

Or the taste of *chocolate abuelita*

On a cold day,

Or the smell of warm food

When I come home from school.

It is the seamless

Effortless

Music

Of my soul

That pours from my lips:

Tortilla.

Pueblo.

Playa de la Hermosa.

Marina pacifica.

San Francisco.

My accent

Is my childhood.

It is the nights my mom

And my *tias*

Spent together

Talking *chisme*

In our living room

While I sat and listened.

It is the family parties

Full of dancing

And laughter.

It is the Sunday mornings

We spent solely

In worship.

It is the first time

My mom taught me

How to pray:

En el nombre del Padre

Y el Hijo

Y el Espiritu Santo.

Amen.

My accent

Is a compass

A brown small circle

And sharp red dial

Adorned with images

Of *muñecas favoritas*,

Colores de verde, blanco, y rojo

Picturas de mi familia

Mi casa

Mi comida

Mi tierra

Always pointing me south

To home

Como una mariposa

Emigra a la tierra

De donde vino.

My accent

Is NOT

for you.

It is not a reason

To take me from the place

I have lived my entire life.

It is not an excuse

To treat me like an animal

Like I am the gum

Sticking

To the bottom of your shoe.

It is not a reason

For you

To take my rights away

Because my tongue

Was forced from my culture

And it is accustomed

To yours,

Because I became

An American citizen

In fifth grade

When I recited English perfectly,

Clearly,

“I pledge allegiance

To the flag

Of the United States

Of American

And to the Republic

For which it stands

One nation

Under God

Indivisible

For Liberty and Justice

For all.”

My accent

Is not a reason

To point a gun in my face

Or a reason

To tell me

To go back to my country

Because this country is mine.

Although I remember the rolling hills

Of Mexico,

My summers

Are filled with memories

Of Fourth of July;

My tongue

Craves the taste

Of In-N-Out

At twelve in the morning;

My mouth

Has melted the ice of English

Away

And has united my cultures:

Mexican

American.

Different tongue.

Same language.

My accent

Is as important

As your flag

As your independence

As your culture

Because it is mine.

It is my struggles

And my triumphs.

It is the reason

I am *ni de aqui y ni de alla*.