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 Espíritu 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 aquí y ni de alla.