

Inspired Poem from Raquel Rivera's Book, "The Tertiary"

Silence in a world of Ignorance by Ricky Castillo

*The blood-colored carpet stares at me and chuckles*

*As I walk through the maze of a classroom*

*Their eyes glare at me like a tiger about to pounce on its prey*

*Do I race to the empty desk in the back?*

*Do I avoid being seen and heard?*

*Do I smile? Do I laugh?*

*Do I sit up or do I slouch?*

*Who am I? What am I?*

*Am I a mere ghost in this world?*

*Am I Mexican or a Gangster?*

*Privileged but silenced*

*The ring of fire surrounds me as I walk past the laughter and mockery*

*My Abuela told me that Dios está a tu lado*

*My parents told me that writing helps*

*Writing about struggle, writing about life, writing about providing, writing about racism*

*I ignore this advice, this path, this effort to aid me in this struggle*

*He says his brain bickers and yells at him to meet the standards and the norms*

*Her tears rain down her face as*

*Her heart tells her to be herself, to not lose her identity*

*She says she felt the walls of oppression inclose on her*

*They speak about their struggle of race and oppression*

*Am I to tell my story?*

*Am I to espera para un mejor dia??*

*Am I to wait for the bells of opportunity to ring?...*

*They speak about how they face microaggression*

*About how they face discrimination*

*I somehow relate... they somehow speak about mere thoughts I have had*

*Alfred Chestnut... Ransom Watkins... Andrew Stewart, murderers*

*Three names, three kids, three adults, three people*

*Falsely convicted, falsely imprisoned...*

*Stamped as murders, branded because of their skin color...*

*Placed in a cage for 36 years*

*Because of who they are...*

*Negroes*

*36 years of their lives stolen*

*The government apologizes*

*Officers apologize*

*In America, we are supposed to trust the system, trust our government*

*These kids, these men trusted the system, did as they were told!*

*But where are the 36 years of their lives?!!*

*Where are those years of just being a silly and stupid teenager?*

*Our childhood, our lives altered because of oppression*

*Because of "what" we are*

*Do I lose hope or gain it?*

*Are these Baltimore men my inspiration or my future?*

*Am I locked in a jail cell of my own creation?!...*

*I am supposed to wait...*

*Wait for people to be better, to be open, to be careful...*

*I am supposed to pray in silence!*

*I am supposed to move on.....*

*But I can't....I can't*

Project:

Raquel Salas Rivera is a Puerto Rican poet who writes in Spanish and English outlining their experience of being a migrant to the United States and the connection they feels to Puerto Rico and the struggles it faces. The book, "The Tertiary" describes the struggle with debt that Puerto Rico has experienced. Rivera also opens up about their personal life and problems with debt. The project's focus was to write a poem based on the writerly choices and topics discussed in the poem, "The Tertiary". The poem was supposed to discuss a problem or topic and display a similar format to Rivera's work. The last part of the project was an analyzation of those choices and how the poem is similar to Rivera's work.

Reflection and Learning:

We did a lot of research on the problem of debt in Puerto Rico and Rivera's connection to that. Rivera talks about how US investors and companies stepped into Puerto Rico making promises of wealth and leaving it with debt and in ruins with just an apology. I was reminded of how this happens all the time in America but with racism and false convictions and how more than an apology is needed. Rivera talks about people waiting to escape debt and leave it behind. I was then reminded of the patience people are supposed to have with the government, with racist, with the world.

