

# VOCES INDIGENAS IN ENGLISH

## I Am From (ENGLISH)

(Translation)

Alma Monjaraz

I am a teen with a lot of problems.  
An out-of-place girl trying to assimilate.  
I am a girl trying to carry the world on her shoulders.  
Knowing that white privilege is everywhere I go.  
In my heart of hearts I am obsessed with seeing my parents out of the field.  
It infuriates me to see how hard undocumented people work and the miserable wage that they pay them.  
It bothers me when they refer to them as “illegals that steal jobs.” It bothers me knowing the ignorance of those around me.  
The comments they make without knowing the sad reality, the terrible things that have happened.  
The many times death has been nearby.  
Knowing that for many, I am not equal because of the color of my skin. All of the discrimination that there is in this world.  
I come from a low-income family, an immigrant family trying to survive in an unfair world.  
I am from leaving my homeland to receive an education.  
I was born and raised in Sinaloa, Mexico but I consider myself indigenous. I come from people that are poor but humble, who despite having nothing, will give you something even if they don't know you just because they have already been through the same thing.  
I remember the anxiousness I felt to come here, the anxiousness much bigger than the sadness I had for leaving my second family behind. I was the last of my family to come to this country.  
It all began when my parents decided to pursue the American dream.  
Because the government in my homeland puts obstacles in order for us to not receive an education.  
I spent 8 years at my beloved grandmother's side, a great woman who in spite of all the pain, let one of her daughters go to cross the desert without knowing the consequences.  
The women who took care of me when my parents abandoned me to be able to go to the United States.  
The woman who taught me values to live by.  
The woman who taught me to value what I have.  
She taught me to be humble because money doesn't buy happiness. She is the mother of my mother who I love and adore despite many years of not seeing her.  
She is my second mother.  
I remember when I was attached to my sister, the only one who remains of the family that we once were. I remember when I was unconscious of the fights that my parents had... when I thought that we were all happy and nothing was bad. Time passed and I realized my ignorance.  
I am from low- expectations set by people.  
I began to see the way their eyes looked down upon me.  
The way they minimized me with their stares. I remember people whispering,  
pointing  
and laughing at me.  
*Oaxaquita,*  
*paisa,*  
*wetback...*  
I am from name-calling.  
Those words that would go through my head every time I failed to do something right, those words that reminded me of who I was, yet I did not feel proud of it. A constant reminder that I could not understand this new foreign language, what they were saying, not being able to

## VOCES INDIGENAS IN ENGLISH

understand the language, *their* language. The language that I had to borrow in order to be *successful* in this country. I remember realizing the power of language, of understanding, on getting informed. In exposing your mind to new things.

I feel the need to inform others that do not have the opportunity to do so.

I will not let them define who I am,  
not allow them to make fun of my indigenous roots,  
of defining my future without my consent.

I will prove them wrong and make my parents proud.

Because I think of a life in which I can accept myself as I am without thinking about what they'll say. Because I've learned that people will judge you no matter what.

I hope that one day we will learn to accept everyone how they are and not how we want them to be.

### **Who I Am**

(Translation)

Arturo Santos

San Vicente Coatlan is the place where I was born. A town in the state of Oaxaca. When I was little I remember going to the fields on the weekends with my grandfather who, on the way, told me stories and legends of my ancestors.

At age 13, my parents decided to bring me to the United States in search of the American Dream. I knew that my life would change but I didn't know in what way or how.

Upon arriving to the United States my life shifted 360 degrees -- it changed radically in every sense. I arrived with the idea of working in the agricultural fields of California. And that's how it was. I worked picking blackberries, blueberries, strawberries, grapes and I cut green beans.

At age 14, 15 and 16 I experienced what it was like to make a living.

For a time that's how it was. But after, my life took another direction.

I entered school and it wasn't easy. There were challenges and obstacles to confront. It was hard for me because I only spoke my mother tongue which is Zapoteco. I was very limited in Spanish and I spoke even less English. It was there that I also learned what is discrimination -- when your classmates mark you as the weird one and make fun of you for the color of your skin or your stature or when they sing you the alphabet when you don't know how to pronounce a word in Spanish.

It makes me so sad to see my own Mexican race discriminating to us, their indigenous brothers when I know it shouldn't be like that.

Today I can say that I feel very fortunate to have my own language. A language that I inherited from my grandparents, my ancestors. A language that has survived 500 years and conquest, one that I still hold dear and speak with pride. Not only a language... We also have culture, unique foods, clothes that represent us. We are diverse.

In my heart of hearts I am obsessed with knowing who I really am because many times I look at myself in the mirror and I don't recognize the person I see. It seems like a dream that I desperately want to wake up from. It seems that it was only yesterday that I was a guy very different from the one I am now. I don't know how it happened or when. The truth is that I am not the same. I ask myself if I have changed for the good or the bad. But I say both, the only thing I know is that I am no longer the pride of the family.

What keeps me up at night is the question, Who am I? What is my purpose in the world? Because I am like a boat in the middle of the ocean without direction. But time passes and runs and I continue, stuck in the same place.

One of the questions I don't have an answer to is about my feelings and what I still have to say. There are times that the only thing I want is to feel and not think. Because it is very intense to not know who I am. Society tells me who I should be and it's not compatible with what I'm feeling. It's confusing.

## VOCES INDIGENAS IN ENGLISH

Well, what I think it is (at least for me) is that what I am feeling is not what I mean to feel or what I should feel based on my religion, society or what my family expects of me. But I always say that everything has the right moment, one decides to speak about our nature and what one has done when we are sure of who we are.

### **What Keeps Me Up At Night**

(Original)

Brandy Pena

I am from a family of Immigrants. My parents came here to give our family a better life. While my mom was pregnant with me she was able to cross the border. Even though they came here and ended up doing back breaking labor, they have hope that me and my brother will help them and allow them to retire.

For their sacrifices I would like to say thank you.

My family is definitely my determination in doing good in life and to work hard. And it's not my family alone that works hard to get a better life, so many other families try crossing the border. Some are successful but others die trying to make their "American dream" possible, but even after all that struggle the people in this country discriminate us and treat us as if we weren't human, they only see us as pests so they try to swat us away like flies.

Hopefully in the distant future they'll understand we are all human and should accept everyone no matter their culture, race, or gender etc.

What keeps me up at night is knowing my parents will have to work and suffer again. What keeps me up at night is wondering what my life will be like in the future and whether my dreams will come true.

Can I actually be successful?

I obsess over these thoughts

### **In My Heart of Hearts**

(Translation)

Gabriel Alba

What I still have to say is... Where I come from and the answer begins with my parents, Jesús and Elsa. My Oaxacan roots come from my maternal grandparents and my Michoacan roots from my paternal grandfather. My parents emigrated to the state of México, to a town called Chimalhuacán to the edge of México City. My parents decided to come undocumented to the United States with me and my two older brothers, I was born in Ventura County.

At two years of age, my parents separated and I never knew why. My mother brought us with her to live in México. My father came to visit us even though his it was illegal to go back across to come again to the United States.

He was a lady's man, a drunk and he was not a part of my life for a majority of my childhood but we never lacked beans to eat or clothes to wear. He was never irresponsible and he took care of us economically and I thank him. My mother understands everything he did.

Like every woman and mother, my mother worried more for my two older sisters because they were women. Although my mother never needed to walk behind me. I was a kid with blindfolded eyes, one that was left out and told that I couldn't give an opinion or understand situations because I was little.

My sisters caused many problems for my mother and made her cry until she was on the floor with sadness, pain, frustration, these girls that my mom took care of so much.

## VOCES INDIGENAS IN ENGLISH

My mother had a huge task which was to raise and take care of three kids alone, it was not enough to have a phone call with my father and fight every day through the phone until arriving at insults.

I decided I didn't want to cause more problems for my mother so I fixed myself how I could which was in school. Turning in homework was my own problem, if I ate was my problem, not hers. No more tasks for her. Although being the youngest, you'd think I would be the biggest problem but it was the opposite. I think that I was the lightest burden that my mother could carry. I had been in the United States for so little time when I was little, I didn't know what it was like to have a father. At 15 years of age my father was deported for alcoholic reasons and my mother and sisters were furious about the lies he told and how he hid his life in another country.

I am no one to judge my father. I supported him when I had to, I told him his faults when I had to. I only learned and understood that in very little time, I would have to return to this country and leave behind all my life, everything that I identified myself with, the place I grew up because for all the many times that he wouldn't be there, I would have to go to work to help him because after the deportation everything changed... and I would learn what it was to live with someone that you had never known. Many fights, many insults and a lot of shouting... the failure of communication as though I were living with a stranger that gave me orders.

I didn't know what it was like to be a son and he didn't know what it was like to be a father. But something more happened after the deportation, he fell into the hands of alcohol even worse than he already was. Everything was worse. He had to go to the hospital for his liver... I felt like he would never get out and it was possible that he wouldn't.

A little later he had an embolism to the brain and I thought this was the reason that I was here, to help him the best that I could. That was my purpose, to help my own.

Although I didn't know what it was like to suffer in a desert or starve or think that you would die, I had also suffered. Not to the same degree but I identify... I left my land, I was seen badly and I had to learn another language. I felt alone and sad.

Today I give you a different story, I have had to be strong. Having to be strong to not allow my comrades to fall, my people who had fallen like this a thousand times, a thousand times I will get up and help my people, my race.

In my heart of hearts I am obsessed with going to México alone for a year. Seeing the most remote places of my land and adventuring in her, my land that is Mexico. I am obsessed with being happy and free and doing what I like no matter how ridiculous it is, I want to do it although to others it might not seem right... living day by day, second by second as though each were my last.

It bothers me when people discriminate to their own race, religion, or whatever else when in the end we are all humans. It bothers me that we stumble again and again over the same rock. It bothers me that people speak badly about others without thinking or getting to know them better. It bothers me when someone thinks they're better than others, it bothers me when people are not humble.

What keeps me up at night is thinking how and why people insist on destroying each other about everything. My number one concern is my family, who I am not with... even though they don't need me, I want to be with them before they get older and years go by without seeing them because that is what always happens, one forgets what they have there and I don't want that to happen.

The question I cannot answer is what exactly do I want? The question I cannot understand is if they want to best for me, what's wrong with wanting to be with them and help them? What is wrong with wanting the best for them and dreaming and living for them... for my race, for my world, because without them I would not be anything.

I don't want to sit here with crossed arms, the one that doesn't see, doesn't support them only hoping that something happens to them, waiting for death... it simply would not be human, I wouldn't be anything. I have to act now that I can. And every moment is the best moment to do it.

## VOCES INDIGENAS IN ENGLISH

### Once Upon A Time

(Translation)

Gris Reyes

Once upon a time there was a girl named Griselda Reyes Perez.

She is from a place of abundant colors, delicious cuisine, many flavors, typical dress, typical dances, humble people, and unique and unequalled traditions and customs of the state of Oaxaca. This little girl was lucky enough to grow up besides a marvelous and unmatched being, an example to follow, the best person that God could have given her the opportunity to learn from and this was her maternal grandfather.

Although the little girl lived with him, she didn't have a complete family because there wasn't a mother figure or father figure and although her grandfather tried to give her everything so that she would be well, he couldn't fill the emptiness that her parents left... and years passed like this. She could never get a hug from her mother or her father. This girl grew up without parents but she always knew that she had to keep going forward for herself and for her grandfather.

But one fateful day, the 27th of June, 2013, something tragic happened to Griselda. The most important person in her life died and it was a very hard hit to her life.

With the death of her grandfather, she had to decide between staying in Oaxaca or returning to Oxnard with her uncles. Griselda knew that staying would depress her and her life would be miserable... the best way was to get distance so she chose Oxnard.

The first time she tried to cross the border with her political aunt... it was a failure and they brought her to a detention center.

Seeing how they treated them in this place, she realized how valuable was her state and she didn't support this treatment. However she tried again and this time it was a success.

However, when Gris arrived in Oxnard she realized people judged her for not being able to speak English as well as for her stature, her indigenous roots, for speaking her indigenous language which is Zapoteco, for being a woman and for being undocumented.

Gris saw people with power taking advantage of the most genuine people... But it made her even sadder that her community just let it happen.

It made her so angry that many times, for not having papers, you wouldn't have the same opportunities as those who did. She asked herself every day: why can we all respect each other as equals? Why don't we take into account that we all have the same rights? No matter where you are from or what language you speak. We are all simply human.

Gris hated knowing that Machismo, sexism, racism and classism existed in the world. It bothered her that people would value you based on what you had and not for who you are. It made her mad to know that parents left their children in the morning to go to work for a miserable salary because "there's no one else" as they say and they would hardly have time to be with their children.

This is not life. What is the point of a family then?

It bothered her that young people, instead of bettering themselves, searched for refuge in drugs, gangs and even treated their families poorly. It bothered her that poverty existed. It frustrated her to know that in school not everyone had the same opportunities. The students learning English were excluded from school activities and worse, they wouldn't count the intelligence of those students, only whether or not you spoke English.

Seeing her world like this filled her with the desire to do something to change her situation and the desire for power to help her community.

One day, she had the opportunity to attend a trip to Northern California in November of 2014 to visit 7 universities... Stanford, UC Berkeley, and UC Santa Cruz among others.

Without a doubt, Gris loved Santa Cruz and has the dream of one day being able to attend this university. This trip was thanks to the Sonadores Sin Fronteras which is part of CLUEVC. This was one of many doors that they opened for this girl. During the trip, a friend talked to her about Tequio. Gris, after hearing everything this group did, felt like she identified with it because of her

## VOCES INDIGENAS IN ENGLISH

indigenous roots and it was the perfect opportunity that she was waiting for, to do something for herself and for her community.

It was the moment that Gris woke up and began to act.

These groups helped Griselda a lot on her path to grow as a person and little by little... this little girl turned into a warrior, an activist, into someone that would continue the fight for herself and her community.

What's more, Gris met a lot of people thanks to these two groups and lived unforgettable things; like the first time that she applied for a scholarship and won it at UCSB... or the time that she attended a leadership camp for 8 days called CLI... or all the times that she had the opportunity to speak in public and be the voice of her community among other memorable moments that this young woman has lived.

Today Gris knows that she has chosen to continue in the fight and she has found a family in Tequio and Soñadores. She knows that they support her in every way they can. In the depths of her heart, Gris is obsessed with waking up one day and knowing that everyone has the same opportunities and that we have left behind all the stereotypes that exist now.

She is obsessed with seeing that values are still alive and are something essential in every human being, that manners are still instilled in every person.

She has not found the love or support from her real family. However she knows that up above she has an angel that takes care of her and protects her along with God. This angel is her grandfather and thanks to him and God she has only found good people that have helped her more than her own family.

What Gris wants more than anything is to give even a little bit back to the people that have helped her so much. Whether it was a word of encouragement, a hug, an "I love you," a kiss, a roof to live under, food or even including her in their family. For now, she knows that she can only say thank you. But she knows that one day she can give them something back. She will do it from her heart because that is how they have done it with her.

She has learned that WANTING IS POWER. Gris knows that being indigenous is not to be less. She didn't understand it before but after experiencing all of the discrimination in another country, she understood the beauty that is her culture, her music, her cuisine, all of these typical clothes, the beauty that is her state of Oaxaca.

Unfortunately, she didn't know to see this in the past and she regrets it but now it's too late and the only thing left to do is to continue in the fight against all the discrimination that exists against her and her people. To help her community and always feel proud of where she is and where she comes from.

She wants to continue pass on her roots, her Zapoteco language to her future family. She wants to instill in them the importance of their roots. She wants a better future! She wants to better herself and she will do it by studying and this will give a better future to herself and her family.

### **Never Forget**

(Translation)

Griselda Torralba

I am from Oaxaca, from a small town called San Marcos Xinicuesta. All my life I grew up there... I didn't grow up with my parents. My parents came to the United States to give me a better life. I grew up with my uncles that I still love very much even though they are far now. Since I was little, my sisters and I called my uncles "dad" because during the time that we were with them they took care of us. But we knew that we had a mother and a father here in the United States, working so that we would never lack food on the table nor clothes to wear.

## VOCES INDIGENAS IN ENGLISH

Years passed and my parents came back to get us to live with them. I was happy because finally I was going to have my mother and father with me... I was going to be with my family. I remember well that it was a Sunday when they arrived at my uncle's house. I will never forget this day because I finally got to see my parents again. It was a beautiful thing.

After some time, my father went back to the States again... They asked themselves why? Why? He had a big family to take care of.

My mother decided to bring us to Maneadero. So that she could work and take care of us at the same time. Every day she would give us a kiss. There wasn't a day that she would leave without a kiss from us. I remember well that she worked in the green beans. Which is not to say it is an easy job because it wasn't. No job in the fields is easy.

The days that she rested she would make us taquitos to take to class. She would drop us off... It's a wonderful thing that your mother takes you to drop you off at school.

Months passed, my dad decided that my mother would return to the US. So we had to go back to Oaxaca to be with my Uncles. We went back.

I ask you to hear only this: value your parents because you never know when they will leave your side.

It was terrible for me because I had to distance myself again from my mother. We went back and studied and we stayed again with my uncles who we called fathers. During this time, while my parents were here in the United States, we never lacked food on the table nor clothes to wear.

A day arrived. The 9th of February 2014. I remember this day well, my birthday.

My uncle sells flowers, pumpkin and other fruits like peaches, cherries, pomegranates... I'm not ashamed to say it, on the contrary, it pleases me very much. Because of this job, I have gotten to know other places, going around everywhere to sell.

This day, the 9th of February, we went out like any other day.

We left at 4 in the morning because it was not close where we were going. And we only finished selling the flowers at 3:30 in the afternoon.

At the end of this 9th of February, my grandmother called us and told us that my grandfather was getting very bad so we went as fast as we could... there were no stoplights.

We went and finally arrived at the house. We didn't want to say anything.

All of the eldest went to my grandmother's house but nobody wanted to tell us what was happening.

One of my cousins came out crying and told us that our grandfather had died. It was something horrible for me because I asked myself why the day of my birthday, why this day, why??

I ask you to hear only this: value your grandparents, value your parents because you never know when they will leave your side.

The 5th of March 2015 my parents decided to bring me to the United States to have a better life.

I arrived here on the first day and I was happy but at the same time very sad because I left behind the people that I love and care about. It was sad because I arrived here and I saw the discrimination that there is. The challenges that you have to go through just because of the color of your skin, for being Mexican.

It irritates me when they discriminate against you without any reasons, without knowing you and yet they talk about you. They think that it's easy to come here. Every one of us has a "why" for being here.

It irritates me when they discriminate against the farmers even though they work under the sun and rain and they get paid miserably. Many say that Mexicans steal jobs from the gringos... when do you see or will you ever see a gringo in the fields?

We do you all the favor of bringing the fruit, the food to your tables.

Everything can be hard.

Never forget where you come from and where you are going.

## VOCES INDIGENAS IN ENGLISH

Don't let the harsh criticisms defeat you or lower your self esteem. No, show them that you are stronger than they think. We all have errors and we all make mistakes. Nobody is perfect. Love the people that love you and show them that it is not too late. Love your land and never forget.

### **Reality Makes Sense**

(Original)

Jose Mendoza

When I was a child, I was a child with no sense of the reality. I remember back in the day I did not have any person to help me go through hardships. I was a child born with no hope, with no destiny. I was mostly like a child with no emotions, I did not care about people and now I am still the same person as when I was a child.

I came to the United States to work in the field but that did not happen because the decision that my dad made changed his world. I really acknowledge my parents but there is still those emotions that I do not really know what I feel about them because I got used to not feeling anything.

I will say that with the help of these classes it help me define half of myself that in the reality, I am a different person.

Because people used to know me as a kind person who understood them. However, I realized the human's behavior, how they can fool you so easily. Now I am a person that people will look at and say that I am cold blooded.

Now I understand why I do not get along with people because as a person with a cold-blooded heart, people would not understand you.

So that's the reason why I always run away from my fear, the darkness in my heart when I was a child because I wanted to fit in. Sometimes I feel those emotions and really hated it but I understand reason to be who I am.

Because I am tired of running away from my emotions and the bad society I live in. I am a person who does not care about the people but at the same time I am trying to help those people who are always trying to reach the darkness of their heart. Those who are trying to define themselves and trying to change.

The society does not want you to succeed, that's why they try to block every emotion of people that would change the future.

Being controlled by the society is like being a puppet. Now I know the reality and what the reality is trying to tell me.

As an undocumented student, I understand that my path will not be easy and some people will discriminate me by the color of my skin, however, I will always try to push myself and change and define myself and acknowledge my history.

However, what will the people do? How are they going to change themselves and change the world?

I wonder how the future will look like.

### **The Best Speech of My Life**

(Translation)

Lauro Lopez

I wake up in the morning excited. The first thing I do is thank god for another day and then I give a kiss on the cheek, on the forehead and on the lips to my wife who always wakes up at my side. I give her a big hug and I say so she hears me, "wake up, my life, today is going to be a great day." She only groans and says "I want to sleep a little more." :)

I let her sleep a little bit longer while I get myself ready and when I return she is fast asleep.



## VOCES INDIGENAS IN ENGLISH

I wake her up strongly because it's hard for her to wake up -- she's not used to waking up so early. She's annoyed but I give her a big hug and remind her that I love her. Looking in her eyes she tells me that she loves me too and we hug and start to get ready.

A special car comes for us because we have to travel.

We arrive at a hotel, a couple welcomes us and receives us... They are at our service, so we don't have to do anything.

They take us to a room where we are going to stay. The room is very elegant and decorated with balloons, strawberries, flowers, chocolates.

We rest a little and then we get ourselves prepared.

They tell us that a limousine will come for us to take us to this great place, a big and beautiful auditorium.

We see a lot of people arriving to the place and the limousine enters through an exclusive entrance.

Many people are there to receive us. People that are incredibly influential and important.

My heart begins to beat really hard. I take the hand of my wife and tell her that I am excited, very happy and glad and I thank her for accompanying me.

We arrive.

They open the door for us and the people form a line to greet us and take pictures of us.

I do relaxation exercises.

At 15 minutes to 8pm, a couple gets up on stage to welcome us.

It is a shining stage. Comfortable red seats and wood floors of the same color. There are lights that turn on and turn off... There is also a beautiful table decorated with flowers and a comfortable chair. The couple greets the audience and begins to say:

"This evening we are going to have the great privilege of meeting a great couple that is an example of persistence, resistance, etc. Really, I could spend the whole night speaking about them and I wouldn't finish."

He gives the microphone to his wife and she says:

"I am going to speak a little bit of this great woman who is straightforward, responsible, with a lot of character, very inspiring and above all very lovely and beautiful. She is always at her husband's side in the good and the bad."

Again she gives the microphone to her husband. He says:

"So this great man is an example to follow, a dreamer, entrepreneurial, but even better let's bring them to the stage so they can tell us how they came into the great success they have had. Please stand and give them a big round of applause."

A song plays in the background called "Vivir Mi Vida" by Marc Anthony.

The couple says: "Straight from Oxnard, CA and onward to the whole world!"

We come out onstage. We shake hands with the couple who presented us. My heart beats fast.

I am wearing a headset microphone. I begin to say:

"Good evening to everyone, it's a great honor, it's a privilege to be here amongst so many people who want to move forward. But first, I want to thank God for having given us another day of life. Thanks to everyone who made it possible for this event to happen. Allow me to introduce myself: my name is Lauro Lopez Mendoza, I am accompanied by my beautiful wife."

My wife simply thanks them for the invitation and then says:

"I leave you with my husband. Open your minds and more than anything, your hearts because he is a man who speaks from the heart. Happy, with a lot of energy, an entrepreneur, social, friendly, respectful. I came to give you the best of me. I leave you with the love of my life, the hero of my home, Lauro Lopez."

I hug my wife and give her a kiss and I say to her: Thank you, my life.

Seated in the first row are incredibly important and influential people. Among them are my friends who came with me and who are my greatest inspiration.

# VOCES INDIGENAS IN ENGLISH

## A LIFE WORTH LIVING

(Original)

Litzy Hernandez

I am from San Jorge Nuchita Oaxaca, México

I am from the impoverished state

I am from mouthwatering food made of rich ajonjolí, ajo, chile cascabel, and chile de árbol

I am from both rhythmic and lyrical tundabi that makes your jaw drop

I am from brown skin humans with beautiful features; powerful jaw lines, rigid noses, with the  
SOFTEST of black eyes

I am from parents who gave it all up in hope of a better life in the land of the free.

Where you have food on the table every day

Where bed is on a frame and not on the rock hard dirt

Where we never have to beg for money so that we have diapers

My parents hoped for this better life but I long for the one that I had

How does someone become foreign in this nation built on immigrants?

How is it possible that the people who pick the food to feed this nation have children sleeping  
with empty stomachs?

How can I have lived here all my life, be class valedictorian with a 4.7 grade point average and  
still not qualify for financial aid?

I came to a place where oppression becomes the norm

Where my parents cannot own a home

Where I am trapped between two worlds: choosing to support my family now or watch them  
suffer as I reach for my future.

I tired of living in a place where a nine digit number defines who you are

Where money prevails heritage

Where a white person is looked upon greater than a native

I'm tired of seeing my parents scared, stressed, and hopeless

I'm tired of the special treatment given to others

Where equality is something people talk about as a fairytale

**WHY IS IT SO HARD TO ACCEPT MY COLOR, MY INDIGENOUS ROOTS?**

I want to live in a world where the melanin of your skin is cherished accepted and loved

Where the government makes room for an individual instead of maintaining a status quo

I want to live in a world where my loved ones do not have to beg for a better life, but get to live  
it.

I want to break free from the sorrow, pain, and broken backs inside la jaula de oro, this Golden  
cage called the American Dream

I am from Juan

I am from Guadalupe

I am from Oaxaca

I am from Oxnard

I am from walking without fear

I am from living without fear

I am from believing you can change

I am from not only change in my life but the life of others around me

**I AM WORTHY**

You see,

I will not be a statistic

I will not give up

I will not let others around me give up

I will not surrender

I will not let others around me surrender because my ancestors did not

## VOCES INDIGENAS IN ENGLISH

### I WILL BE CHANGE

I will encourage others around me to be change

### AND THINGS WILL CHANGE

I am here to tell you my story, but there is also eleven million other undocumented humans  
suffering for the same dream

Yo estoy aquí para contarte mi vida, pero hay aún 11 millones de humanos indocumentados lo  
cual también están sufriendo por un sueño

Choo hie na cane hortaria shii vide. ju ta ii ushu ii million naa coo tutu shii jica ni caja sufrir na  
saa ni sueño shiina

### **My Anger Makes Me Strong**

(Translation)

Maria Monjaraz

It makes me angry when people criticize me for my dark skin, treat me differently, that they judge me when they hear my accent in English.

That they see me differently when they see my indigenous traditions and culture.

It bothers me when upon hearing the name "Oaxaca" they laugh or whisper.

When upon hearing that I come from Mexico, they underestimate me and don't believe I'm capable of achieving my dreams because I'm indigenous and Mexican.

It bothers me when I say that my parents are farmworkers people feel bad for me.

When they criticize farmworkers, my parents.

It infuriates me when they say that we come here to "steal" their jobs.

It makes me so angry that my parents work all day, bent down under the harsh sun and they are paid miserably.

That even under the rain they have to work to be able to bring bread home.

It infuriates me when my parents have to always follow orders and can't say "no."

It makes me mad that my parents' voices are not heard.

That many cannot defend themselves because they don't know Spanish.

That the farmworkers (my parents) are treated like slaves and can't complain.

It fills me with rage knowing and seeing that many times they are hurt at work and they don't report it so they don't have to rest and lose money.

That many farmworkers don't know their rights and are taken advantage of.

It bothers me so much when upon hearing the word "farmworker" and "undocumented" they say that we "are not worth anything."

When they judge my parents for wanting to overcome and take us forward and they call them "bad parents" for not dedicating the time to us kids that we deserve.

It INFURIATES me when parents take advantage of every free moment to work to give their children what they ask for and the children do not value this sacrifice.

It bothers me when parents take the bread out of their own mouths to give it to their children and their children don't value it.

It fills me with rage when a child is embarrassed by their parents for being farmworkers or indigenous.

When people pretend to be something they are not.

When they pretend to have what they don't have.

When will the workers in the fields be treated with equality?

When will we undocumented people have the same rights?

When will there be justice for their rights?

For our rights??

When will indigenous people stop being discriminated against?

## VOCES INDIGENAS IN ENGLISH

When will I be able to give a better life to my parents?

When will I take my parents out of the field?

When will I pay my parents back? Especially my mother for everything she has done, for all of her sacrifices?

In extreme conditions under the harsh rays of the sun?

For a minimum and unfair wage to take the children, the family forward, and still they say that we have come to “steal” their jobs.

It fills me with rage to see and know that my parents must always restrict themselves from many things because their wage is not sufficient.

It hurts me to see how my little siblings happily put up with not having what they want, not even going to the park with my parents because my parents have to work.

That my little siblings spend most of the day in daycare instead of at my parents’ side. They cry every morning because they are tired and they want to stay home.

I remember when I was little, at a young age I had to separate from my parents. I always dreamed of being able to be with them and my little brother.

They always promised me that my life would be different if I studied a lot.

My parents inspired hope in me with a beautiful life and a great future here in the United States.

I was separated from my grandmother who I love like a mother and who I was used to and I also had to separate myself from my little sister who I was very attached to.

As a little girl, it filled me with fear and sadness knowing that I would leave my family and have to start a new life in an unknown place. Why sad?

Because I could leave behind my family, especially my grandmother without knowing when I would see her again, if I would ever see her again. And I was scared because I didn’t know anyone and I didn’t know English.

But at the same time I jumped and cried with happiness because finally I would see my parents and my little brother again.

It was hard for me to have to get used to a new life without knowing who would guide me in my education and I would have to make new friends.

So I walked through the desert with my aunt and uncle and other people I didn’t know and I started to think how my reunion with my parents would be.

At night I was scared by how the animals howled... I was freezing, I was hungry and thirsty.

There were moments where I couldn’t walk. I only wanted to rest a few moments. But there wasn’t anyone to carry me, only my aunt who dragged me so I wouldn’t be left behind.

But it was all worth it. I reunited with my parents. Once again I smelled and felt this aroma, this warmth that is specific to your mom.

I realized that everything happened for a reason, not by change. After having passed through various obstacles, I have never given up and I have learned to be strong, a fighter, brave.

I have turned into a young woman with many goals to accomplish, many dreams to realize with the hope of one day helping others.

I am the hope for my parents to have a better life. I am the guide of my siblings to a life that is worth living.

Thank you for everything, dad, thank you mom.

Thanks to everyone here and good evening.

## VOCES INDIGENAS IN ENGLISH

### Tearing Down Walls

(Translation)

Miguel Rendón

I am from a small town of approximately 700 inhabitants, nestled in the mountains of Oaxaca, México. I am a young man with dark skin, brown eyes, I am a young man of short stature. I am one who very proudly yells aloud the name of his beautiful state, Oaxaca!

Which state is very known for its entrepreneurial people. People that are humble and hardworking, breaking their backs, working arduously underneath the sun to bring a plate of food to their tables.

I am a young man who, like everyone, has dreams and goals to accomplish. I am a young man who is ready to knock down walls to obtain what I desire. I am a young man who, when hurt, cures his wounds and then prepares for a new battle that I think I will win because I! I will not be defeated and I consider myself my own hero.

I am the son of humble parents, parents that without money but with much care have given me everything. I am a son that is ready to do anything for his parents. One who dreams of a future in which I can give them everything like they have done and continue to do.

Good evening, general public that find yourselves present on this day. My name is Miguel Rendon and today I have come to tell you all my story. The story of a 7 year old kid that had to be separated from his parents because they had to immigrate here to this place in which we actually find ourselves because of the sad reality that one lives in our country. They had to set forth in new directions to find new opportunities and a better future for us their children and their families and for this they had no other option that to abandon their parents, their cultures their lands in which they had lived their youth and of course with all the pain of their souls, we their children. And they had to turn to the mentality of the American Dream, although being in your own country paints you with a thousand colors, but being there you bump into the cruel reality as if it were a bucket of cold water.

I don't have a lot of memories of the day that I was separated from my parents to go live with my grandparents but ever since I can remember I was living with my beloved grandparents who I called dad, mom. I knew that they didn't conceive but they gave us all their love as if they were our own parents and not our grandparents.

I remember that my parents called us like twice a week to ask us if we were doing okay and to be sure that we weren't missing anything economically because that was the only thing they could give us. For me it showed that they love me but through a telephone speaker was not the same as a hug, a look.

For me it was sad to live without my parents near me because in spite of having all the love of my grandparents they couldn't fully cover the space of parents that I was missing. Many days I would remember them and it made me very sad because I needed them. I saw other kids hugging their parents and I wanted to be with my parents close to me just like them.

There were times when I asked my grandparents when my parents would come to see us and they only thing they would answer is that they were coming soon because they needed to work and it wasn't possible to come right away because they were really far. There were so many of my questions that my grandparents couldn't answer so I didn't have another option than to give up and begin to replace my parents with my grandparents.

So this is how the days went, the nights, the months, the years, the airplanes that I would see and watch in the sky and I would yell bye dad, bye mom... with a smile and sometimes tears.

8 years passed like this until I was a teenager, graduated from primary school and starting high school... during this time I spoke very little of my parents. I just wanted to be with my grandparents for all my life but I began to get very sad when my grandmother was diagnosed with cancer and so she could no longer make us food or take care of my brothers and me.

## VOCES INDIGENAS IN ENGLISH

So an aunt came had to come to take charge of us and my grandmother that was sick because my parents couldn't leave the country because they had to keep working not only to take care of us now but also to pay for the medical bills of my grandmother.

Almost a year passed and my grandmother became much worse, so bad that she had to be operated on and so my parents felt obligated to return to take care of us, their children. When they came back we were very happy but for me it was hard to show it... because the words "dad," "mom" were not natural to say. Because I had already grown accustomed to calling my grandparents those names...

Only a little time passed and my grandmother got healthier.

And the same story came to happen again. My parents decided that we would immigrate with them to this country so once again I would be separated from the people that I saw as parents... and with tears of my heart I had to abandon my grandparents and walk approximately 20 days in the desert of Nogales Sonora in the mud in order to get here.

In this desert I got very hungry, thirsty... The suffering was so much that these 20 days will stay with me forever.

And so finally I reflected and understood that nothing in life is easy. My past motivated me to want to be someone in life. I arrived to this country and I had to adapt to another totally different world because it was a different language, the freedom was another... here, I am a stranger, discriminated against, an undocumented, someone without a voice of expression, a person who lives underneath under the humiliation of racism, living hidden from border control as if I was a criminal when my only crime is wanting to progress.

Life has hit me hard but in spite of this I continue strong in order to break down the millions and millions of walls that have been put in front of me. Because my past happened so that my future could be different. I think God for the life that he has given me because I have learned so much from it.

Now my wings unfold to make my dreams a reality.

And although many people have known me since I was little they see me now tell me that I have changed so much.

I smile at them and say this, my only answer: I have not changed! I continue to be the same person that I was at the beginning only now I have learned from life.

And learning is not changing it is growing.