

# Varrío Voices

POETRY ANTHOLOGY

VOLUME 1

EDITED BY  
ARTURO MUÑOZ



# Varrío Voices

PRESENTED BY

Velez



# Our Varríos' Voices

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# Our Varríos' Voices

## INTRODUCTION

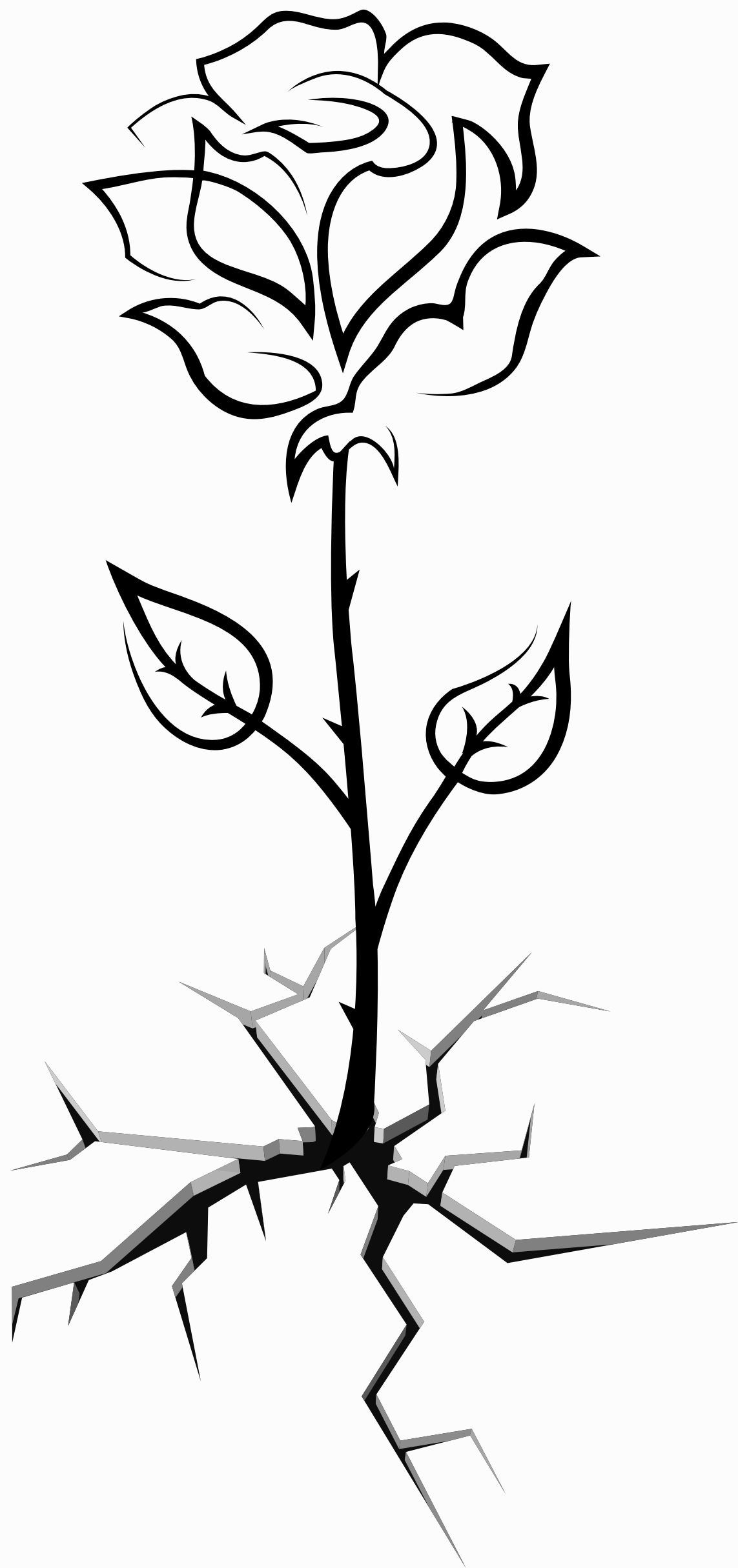


Varrío Voices, founded in 2019, came to be as a response to the need of positive representation of people of color among media outlets. Arturo "Velaz" Muñoz, founder and director of Varrío Voices, began the organization's journey, elevating our varrios' stories via podcasting as he recognized the value of our community's ancestral practice of oral history. Notably, Varrío Voices has since taken on the responsibility to further highlight our stories via additional forms of media, welcoming you to our very first annual Our Varríos' Voices poetry celebration.

Poetry has always taken the mind where history books cannot. It allows our voices to be understood beyond a characterless statistics by reaching into the hearts of many with such profound storytelling. As we embrace the essence of each poem, we engrave into our memory the stories and experiences of our varrios, stemming from the immense depths of our own roots.

May the collection of poetry featured in this poetry anthology bring you a bliss of delight and satisfying epiphanies as we look to further contribute to the understanding of the complex intersectional identities of those within our own varrios. No one story is identical, yet neither stand alone. The following voices you will come to read are what collectively makes our varrios what they are. We hope you see yourself within the writing of one or more of the featured poets.

We appreciate you taking the time to read and acknowledge our varrios' voices. A huge thanks to the writers who recognize the importance of being a voice for the many within our community. Enjoy our forever living testimonies found in our varrios' voices.



**Mi Varrio, My Home**

by Arturo "Velaz" Muñoz

We are told to think about a life outside the varrio,  
but the varrio is all I know.

I was raised by the wisdom of those who walk these streets;  
las señoras, los eloteros, los lowriders.

I may not know better, but I know this is home,  
these are mi gente, we struggle together- never alone.

Arturo "Velaz" Muñoz is a community organizer, aspiring poet,  
and the founder of Varrio Voices, aiming to enhance the media  
representation of communities of color.

**What Was Taken**

by Elodia Esperanza Benitez

When they took Andres  
Before the sun could wake  
Nana to make coffee  
They took all the jokes  
All the loud music  
The soft cologne scent in the room  
They took the evening cruises with burgundy lipped girls  
When they took my brother  
They took the sun.

Elodia Esperanza Benitez, born and raised in Gilroy,CA,  
graduated from Mt. Madonna Continuation High School, and  
hopes to continue her writing career.

**Our Huipiles**

by Roselynn Hernandez

I don't know my father pero soy hija del sol,  
morena, hija de mi madre sureña

Oigan, historias that gave us no choice but to send our huipiles  
to Oaxacan heaven, porai con las pencas de maguey

Que gacho.

Motherland, nadie me contó the CHICANO DREAM  
would be this way

Roselynn Hernandez is a first-generation Santanera pushing  
through hardship, recently graduated from UC Berkeley, and now  
pursuing an MPH to help the comunidad y familia.

**The Americas**

by Karen Gonzales

North, Central, South

Two continents

Borders connected

GOD BLESS AMERICA!

Which one?

All three?

DIOS BENDIGA LAS AMERICAS!

Karen Gonzales, Coordinator of Las Comadres & Friends National  
Latino Book Club-Denver Network & Co-Founder of the Colorado  
Alliance of Latino Mentors & Authors.



**El Sueño de Mis Padres**

by Dulce Saldivar

Yo soy la niña de sus ojos

Yo soy la niña de sus sueños

La que cumple día a día los sueños de sus padres

Que hace y deshace

Que con el apoyo de sus padres a logrado mucho

Llevo en mi, sangre Mexicana pero soy Americana

Yo soy Chicana

Dulce Saldivar is a Chicana constantly reminded by her parents that she is living the life they never had a slight chance of.

**What Does it Mean to be Mexican?**

by Dre Vega

Your vitality is in your coding

Your pride lives in your veins

Your blood is Aztec rituals, remedio del Indio,

y corazón del esclavo

You are the face of strength

The hummingbirds are coming to my ears

They say you're still breathing amongst the toxic fumes

Dre Vega is a young sentient learning to express her heart through poetry.

**Looked Upon As The Bad Person**

by Victor Jimenez

When your looked upon as the bad person,  
But when in fact your not,  
Misconstrued, misunderstood,  
for wearing khakis & tattoos,  
I've been misjudged,  
I've been hated too.  
When your looked upon as the bad person,  
but when in fact you're not.

Victor Jimenez first began writing poetry at the age of 17 as short poems before going to bed as a way to vent.

**East L.A.**

by Jaquelin Valenzuela

Distant gunshots,  
My chaffinches singing in the morning.  
Greenhouse gases and carbon monoxide,  
My fresh air.  
Brick walls covered in phrases that exhibit stolen territory,  
My fine arts museum.

Jaquelin Valenzuela is a first gen- Latina student, born and raised in California. Jaquelin is very artistic and enjoys all form of art, whether it be film, painting, or poetry.

**La Morena**

by Diana Urias

Morenita, prietita, negrita no ocupas que te digan  
Eres una hermosura  
Te comparan con las más claritas pero no te confundas  
Es lindo ser Mexicana y espero que un dia o quizas mañana  
No haya relación entre color y fama  
La piel sangra cuanto la cortas  
El color no importa

Diana Urias is a former foster youth and juvenile justice involved Chicana from San Jose majoring in Sociology at UC Berkeley who utilizes writing as a form of healing.

**Rooted I Am**

by Gilberto Ramirez Aguilar

I am from Soil, Water and Corn  
From rigid calloused hands.  
Yo vengo de padres Inmigrantes  
From Blood, Sweat and Tears.  
Sometimes I forget que  
Although I am not perfect  
And have a lot to learn,  
I have just as much to contribute.  
I am part of a cultivating Legacy.

Gilberto Ramirez Aguilar, Chicanx scholar, community organizer, activist, and ally to many. Heartworker for Equity, Inclusion and Justice. Born in Indaparapeo, México and raised in Napatitlan (Napa, CA).

## **Genocide**

by Edson Gersain Martinez

"Did you hear about Joaquin? took two to the chest."

"So, shit like this happens everyday."

hope has been hung on a noose by the throat

respect for each other we hardly give

generations of empty souls, clutching the cold

life taken away by one that holds the same complexion

Edson Gersain Martinez, raised in Los Angeles County, has been shaped by police brutality, gang affiliations and graffiti, using writing and poetry to escape from reality and to speak his truths.

## **Color Clash**

by Victor Virgen

Love; red or blue, love has no color. Hate; red or blue, hate

equally has no color. Bullet to the head, 5 year old dead, just

another bystander. Bullets are non biased, have no name.

Squeeze of the trigger was a command, to put a soul made of sand...

...to rest.

Victor Virgen, a Chicano from Salinas, CA, is an emcee and the podcast host of The Hip Hop Spot Podcast, My Gente Can Write Podcast, and Raza Stand Podcast.

**Niños en la Jaula de Oro**

by Fernanda Avalos Romero

Unos corrieron por el cerro.  
Others were hidden en el carro.  
Otros se ahogaron en el río.

Rogando sobrevivir  
the pandemic  
la pobreza  
la injusticia.

Some of us  
llegamos al norte.

La jaula mayor  
brilla  
al otro lado de la frontera  
como el Sueño Americano  
es la jaula de oro.

Fernanda Avalos Romero is a morenita, chaparrita, y chingona originaria de Michoacán, Mexico, out in California writing poetry for their Spanglish soul.



**El Ultimo Sábado**

by Jonathan Ordiano

“Hora del break!”, yells El Mayor

I look to the sky

Sun at its peak, dust in my eyes

One bandana each wrist, I can't feel my hands

I walk to my mom, four strawberries each hand

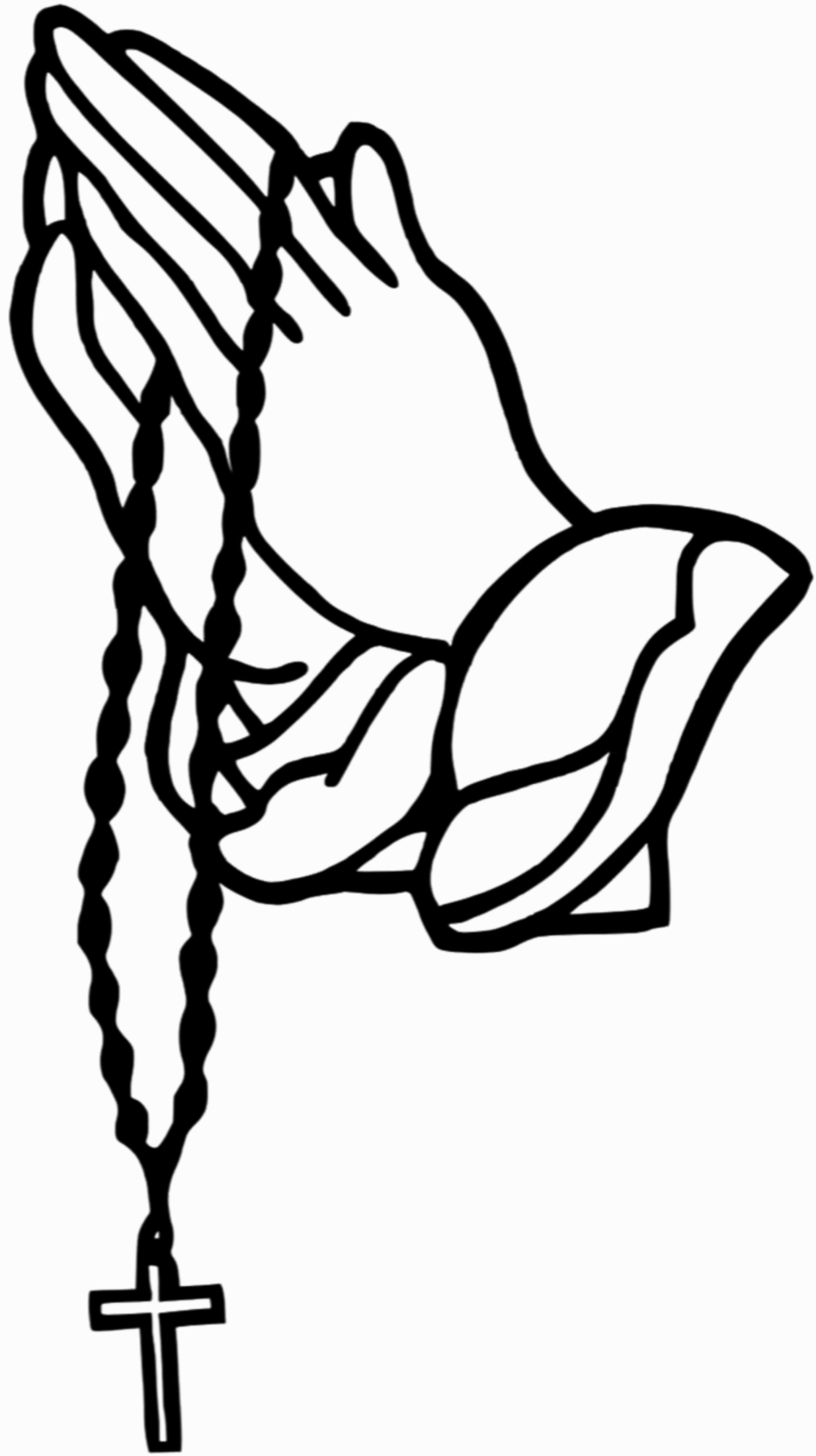
“Gracias mijo”

I look to the road, freedom

I'll be back next summer

And the one after that

Jonathan Ordiano, fourth year computer science student at CSUMB, proudly born and raised in the East Side of Salinas, CA.



**Mujeres De Oro**

by Nancy Perez

My mother's words were, "ahora sabes como me siento"  
I'd ran to her after another beating from mi papa  
And yet at six years of age, I knew she meant,  
"I know how you feel"

The truth is, no hay belleza en machismo  
Pero mujeres sufridas valen oro

Nancy Perez is a 20 year old, first generation American working  
on a BA in Dance at SJSU.

**The 405 (for my first Jefe)**

by Michael Papias

Metal-chariots holding 3-generations.  
Out their windows,  
Jefes sang for the dirt left behind.

Brown sweat packed tight.  
Stitches paid for in cash,  
Cause Mr. Ben-Franklin didn't need Tavo's social.

At 5pm,  
The 405 was a river of flatbeds,  
Buzzing with  
red-break-light-fireflies.

Jefes eager y tired,  
Ready to drown in cerveza.

Michael Papias is a first-generation Latina/x/o foster youth  
student who uses poetry to hold onto the positive memories of  
their childhood in LA.

**What They Do**

by Damian Aguilar

Day and night, working like clockwork,  
both of you wound up like toy soldiers  
resembling the cartoons on the "telé,"

Money flew out of your hands,  
but our home was filled with  
A different currency.

As you witness us grow older,  
we remain rich with love.

Damian Aguilar, from Palmdale, CA, is in pursuit of higher learning and to pass on knowledge to the people.

**Valor**

by Susana Celis

Valoro a mi familia,  
mi identidad.  
Lo único que me dio la vida.

La protejo, como una ardilla que esconde su comida.

Nada me distrae de lo que es importante.  
No el dinero, no lo que dicen, "limited edition."

Mi familia es mi limited edition.

Susana Celis is a Chicanx senior student from East Los Angeles majoring in Film at University of California Berkeley.

**Kodiak**

by Sean Easton

As snow falls, the fire crackles,  
I see their glowing eyes around the hearth,  
From the beyond the trees people cackle,  
Do I chose my own survival or my warmth?

Sean Easton is a student at MSU Denver studying Marketing and CIS. Sean have always loved poets like Robert Service.

**Todavía Estamos Vivos 529 Later**

by Evaristo Martinez

In 1592, Columbus sailed the ocean blue  
592 years... the horrors this land has gone through  
Races were created to show white dominance  
Governments rule over the populace  
Toxic nationalistic pride was created to make us forget our roots  
But 1592 years later, indigenous raza knows that's just a  
substitute

Evaristo Martinez is a Zapotec scholar raised in Boyle Heights.  
Evaristo absorbed Chicanx history all around his community and  
combined it with his indigeneity.



**The Death that Life Maintains**

by Jennifer Martínez-Medina

I'll grow again  
But this time into corn  
Carrying everything the land learned  
Sprouting up to  
Feed the birds  
Who then suckle honey off the flowers  
Until I float like pollen and  
Disappear into the wind  
Becoming the rain  
That ends a drought of fire  
Falling behind someone's tears of pain  
I want the death that life maintains

Jennifer Martínez-Medina is from the valle central, scholaring Al'tanteo.

**Escape**

by Josie Ruby

Save me from this place. The broken castle in my mind, the dying rose in my heart. Save me from this place. The place between life and death, the place between sleep and wake. Dear lord my soul to take, if you save me from this broken place.

Josie Ruby is fifteen year old student from Gilroy, CA.

**My Thank You Letter**

by Pico Del Hierro-Villa

Thick love touches my thicker skin  
I've found a home away from sorrow  
Unraveling all past traumas  
Guiding hands lead the way  
I feel whole and can feel my heart breathe once again  
Gracias Tierra Madre  
Gracias comunidad  
For all my healings

Pico Del Hierro-Villa (they/them) is a fronterizx from El Paso, Texas currently getting their Masters in Chicanx Studies at UNM. They find healing and passion in their art.

**How Many Will Be Too Many?**

by Edivaldo Martinez Castillo

Sangre keeps on spilling,  
Too many to keep count of.  
Occurrences have become daily,  
Pero nada cambia.  
  
Fifty thousand yearly,  
Even more unreported!  
Many at the hands of a "loved" one,  
Intersectionalities determining frequency,  
Culture and traditions condoning it!  
It's time we ask,  
Don't they deserve better?  
End the patriarchy!

Edivaldo Martinez Castillo is a Zacoalco de Torres, Jalisco native working towards his Ethnic Studies Major and Education Minor at UC Berkeley with the end goal of going into academia.

### **Shake The Ivory Tower**

by Maxine Christina Sigala

Shake the Ivory Tower!

Shake the Ivory Tower, Comadrta Salazar shared  
to CU Denver Doctoral Students of Color Comadritas y  
Compadres!

Righteous Rage, she proclaimed!

Resilience & Resistance & Refusal to Quit our Doctoral Journey!

Remember Professor Richard Delgado's words

Power Does Not Concede Without a Fight!

Aho! Mitakuye Oyasin

Maxine Christina Sigala moves with prayers for their dissertation  
on the factors that help or hinder the tenure process for  
Chicana, Latina, and Native American women. Aho!

### **What Kind of Guacha Am I? Pt 2**

by Yelisa Ambriz

the- let me walk into the club

with my favorite bright yellow skirt and ribbons in my hair

the- let us sing a Tigres del Norte song

to remind us where we come from

and walk each row of the remate to keep us grounded

the- hold up, let me go grab my, "i crossed the border three  
times" travel bag

the-i'm sorry- i will never be able to fulfill that void in your heart  
with my luv...

Yelisa Ambriz is the daughter of immigrant farm working parents  
who was raised in Fresno, Califas. She is a guacha by blood,  
Fresno brown girl by heart, and poeta by nature-living and  
learning from the fields and the barrios of the CV.

**Days We Don't Speak Are Tragic**

by J. Beato & C. Medina

No crying or weeping,  
Yet the days are chaotic.  
feeling distant from you,  
myself, everything,  
alone in existence.  
as if I'm dependent upon  
our conversations to be,  
Your absence  
Renders this life meaningless.  
our time together is lost to history,  
Yet the feeling remains...

Odd Blue Roses is a forward thinking creative collective based in Miami, focused on cultivating community and spaces for artist and personal development.

**Icon**

by Luis Garcia

I believe I am a spiritual presence,  
an essence, a vibrational human.  
Living vicariously in colors.  
Smothered in artistic summer odors  
of blossoming roses, and fruit orchards.  
Shining like pillaged crystallized rubies,  
absorbent like melanated brothas.  
Birthing life like beauteous soul sistas.  
Fluorescent like rioted fiery streets.  
Representing like Iconic Leaders.

Luis Garcia, as a child, was exposed to difficult adversities regarding low financial instability, unavoidable violence, and absentee parents. Poetry is his nature, peace, and pain.

**Untimely**

by Anna Vargas

In marriage,  
My hair will be a triangular hedge,  
Strands like insulation.  
On the day of clean reckoning,  
Finally they band together,  
Clutching their brethren with newfound reverence;  
A fellowship of curls springing up from the tomb.  
Where were you when I needed you?  
My pain is almost through.

Anna Vargas is a first-year undergraduate student at Stanford University recently interested in entertaining hypotheticals and dropping out.

**The Wisdom In Our Roots**

by Montserrat Hernandez

"...As I braid your hair,  
never forget  
the Temples of which you come from,  
  
and that  
only those with onyx eyes  
have truly seen the sun."

Montserrat Hernandez is a proud Mexican-American actress, writer, and aspiring director who's passion is to open more doors in the industry for our people..



**G**

by David G. Castillon-Mendoza

Guadalupe,

Like my dad

David G. Castillón. (1966 - )

Como mi abuelo

Guadalupe Castillón. (1945 - 2016)

Como mi bisabuelo

Guadalupe Castillón Hernández. (1916 - 1958)

Como mi tatarabuelo

Guadalupe Castillón Rodríguez. (1892 - 1958)

Como la mestiza madre de Jesucristo

La Virgen de Guadalupe. (1531)

¡MESTIZX DIVINX!

David G. Castillon-Mendoza is a LGBTQ+ Christian Chicanx student activist from Rio Grande Valley living in Salinas Valley.

**Decolonial Dreaming**

by Blu Au

As surviving children of Indigenous peoples on colonized lands we must be able to breathe into a world beyond the constructs of colonial corruption. We must find the pace of our breath again through the heaviness of these histories, as they cannot rest without us. We must insist on the space and stillness to dream these old ways into new worlds. We must call in the courage to create from these dreams, our deepest desires.

Blu Lopez Au (they/them/elle) is a non-binary chicanx-indigequeer-gaysian. They're currently working on a Masters in Mexican American Studies and are interested in understanding the creative, non-linear, and liminal ways ancestral knowledge is acknowledged and accessed as a resource to heal colonial generational trauma.

**Continuum**

by Jessika Morrison

Come explore the dazzle out the window  
where velvet clouds surround  
eternity and time melts off  
wild sky mornings.

Picture grass sprouting,  
the yellow warbler singing  
in the blackberry thicket  
as the day begins to live.

Ask man for whom he breathes.

Jessika Morrison, native of Sacramento, holds her M.A. in creative writing from California State University, Sacramento. Her work has appeared in Havik, Up the Staircase Quarterly, and In Parthentheses.

Sacramento. Her work has appeared in Havik, Up the Staircase Quarterly, and In Parthentheses.

**Subjects of Ennugi**

by Oswaldo Vargas

I've done this for so long i began  
to name the corn stalks  
and lead processions for then they buckle.  
I dig lanes where the machines forget to;  
I am a student of water,  
my teacher nowhere to be found.  
i have a theory for who is behind  
this wind that chills my wet back:  
Ennugi, Sumerian god of water,  
take over my arms when i just can't anymore  
like you did with my parents  
we only get to ask Ennugi one question  
per lifetime  
mine is:  
do you know if the sun has nicknames for us,  
or if it reacts at all

Oswaldo Vargas is a former farmworker and UCD graduate. He  
lives in Sacramento, CA



**We Love Who We Love**

by Renee Fajardo

Not called the West Side when I was little  
Just where we lived  
Down Galapago St.  
Where all, including the gay boys  
My primo Napoleon hung with  
Were welcome to tamales and beans  
Cuz we loved who we loved  
That made us familia  
Regardless of circumstance  
Or anything else

Renee Fajardo is a mother of seven, a cultural activist, and MSU Denver Chicana/o Studies Department Journey Through Our Heritage director.

**My Love Is Brighter Than The Stars**

by Jesus Angel Carrera

Baby you are my moon  
You are my star  
You are my number one  
  
Honey you are my Sun  
You are my heart  
You are my Bright New Star  
  
I go in life loving you (Baby)  
I go in life worshiping you (Honey)  
Like the Moon, Sun, and Stars

Jesus Angel Carrera, Mexican poet and Author of the "The Manifesto of an Aboriginal Descendant of North American Indigenous People," Currently lives in the city of Santa Ana, CA.



**How to Love a Mestiza Woman**

by Laura Soto

To love a Mestiza woman,  
a Mexica woman,  
a Warrior woman  
you would have to love her strength,  
passion, resilience, resistance,  
her sacredness;  
her humility to learn through unsolved grievances,  
her connection to the cycle of life and its mysteries,  
her ties to mother earth and her whisperings.

Laura Soto, a Mexican ARTivist, poet, and co-founder of Voces Unidas of Boulder County and Colectivo Cultura, who enacts social justice activism through her art.

**Hombre Hermoso**

by Michael Mendoza

Hombre hermoso,  
love me like you do,  
como macho, con machismo, con su cuerpo too.  
Telling everything in silence  
when our bodies 'come' as one.  
You're left empty, y yo? Nada;  
the moment that you're done.  
Hombre hermoso,  
'El Clandestino' de Midnight.  
Absolution? Consentido, for  
he's husband to a wife.

Michael Mendoza, a beautiful mess in so many words and other cliches.

# Barrio Voices

PRESENTED BY

Velaz

