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Cerote

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Cerote

By Klara Hernandez

I think my Central American voice has been silenced for long enough. You all know I am Salvi. You all have seen my “El Salvador” flag lanyard hanging from my backpack. My “Salvadoreña” and pupusas y platanos stickers on my water bottle. Tattoo on my arm. Heck maybe I’ll slap on a bumper sticker. Yes, I can feel the eyes rolling behind me thinking, “we get it you’re Salvi.” But nah, I have to do this every day until I die. Because it makes me sick to my stomach when people assume I’m Mexican. There was a good chunk of my life when I loved that because it was easier. Growing up I was branded “cerote” every single time I told a Mexican that I am Salvadorian (I intentionally spell it “I-A-N” by the way). I am reclaiming “cerote,” that word is mine now. It’s like our “n” word, and assuming I am Mexican is like saying all Asians are the same, it’s racist. My dad is in El Salvador right now, he left last night. For ten years he has been fighting for his green card back. Finally, the whole family shows up to court because during Trump’s time we thought this was it. The judge said because all his kids showed up, he gave him his green card back, and it felt like a miracle. That was the second time I’ve seen my dad cry. So he is there now scoping out all the safe areas waiting for me to meet up with him in a couple weeks. I am going to meet my grandpa and I am going to know my roots. It was hard to bring it out of him but my dad’s childhood consisted of dead bodies everywhere. Gunshots and bombs going off randomly. He escaped at eleven, the year before he would have been recruited into the civil war. He got here above a train. Daringly, I asked my grandma if she took a train. She snapped back, “I walked!” with such a faraway look I asked no further. Honestly, I hate speaking Spanish, don’t get me wrong I love my culture and I want to speak my native tongue, but it was literally cut out of their mouths. I get angry when I think about how Spanish was raped into my people. It makes me want to decolonize every aspect of my life. I want to run back to my roots but there is nowhere, nothing to run back to. So desperately I want to reconnect but it’s extinct.