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## Mis Raíces

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## Mis Raíces

By Kathy Zamora

Soy de Escondido, California. I was born and raised there. Hasta que vine aquí a Arcata, California para mi primer año de colegio. Escondido is a part of San Diego County, I grew up living one hour away from Tijuana y dos horas de Los Ángeles. Mi ma y pa tried their best to make me feel secure my whole life. After the Great Recession, my family and I moved to West 5th Avenue. It wasn't so bad, my Tio Coco lives on that street too. Once I began to get comfortable with our house on 5th Avenue the rent got higher.

We moved to Ash Street. Not so bad again, my Tio Juan is a quick drive away and my Tio Amedeo is a walk away, I had family surrounding me everywhere. Holidays were always crazy with our big family, driving around Escondido on the holidays meant to watch out because cops will place "Check-Points" on our blocks. Don't worry though, la vecina or my Tia will probably warn you.

Although you will get comfortable in Escondido, you will see people you went to elementary school with, you will run into what's her name's mom at the tienda and you'll see homegirl at the kickback. Las fiestas, the get-togethers, y los recalentados create the space I don't take for granted. It's that familiar feeling and space that makes you feel secure. But Escondido will trap you. In Escondido, I am surrounded by my people but my people are fighting and surviving.

My first year in Humboldt was transformative. Because of EOP, I was enrolled in CRGS my first semester. I learned that white patriarchy is real and affecting lives including my own community. With our current president, it was more obvious for me to realize how his rhetoric is racist and xenophobic. I have relatives that voted for Trump, I have brothers that used to say I was "overreacting," that my view of America has changed. We have been living in a White man's world, where people of color, LGBTQ+, anyone that does not fit the part are unwanted. The world we are living in has favorites and brown people are not it. Being educated about America's corruption has made me passionate to expose and resist society's norms. After living in Humboldt for a few months, I returned for the holidays. I went home with a new perspective but Escondido didn't change. I was ready to tell my parents that the system is unjust and we must fight back. Instead, my parents' reaction was "Mija, qué te ha dicho? Este es tu país." I noticed how we, Mexican-Americans,

are forced to conform and believe that one day we will also achieve the American Dream. Similar to Mosquita's parents from the film *Mosquita y Mari* (2012), my parents have pushed me to excel in school. My parents knew that I had the privilege to get a higher education and never work as they have. My parents have been working non-stop since the day they came to the United States. They have been dreaming about the American Dream.

The American Dream is living in the suburbs with your perfect family, a man and his wife, some children, in a beautiful neighborhood. Children's books, the Hollywood industry, and our school system allows institutional and systemic racism to continue to exist in our country. My parents are undocumented. My dad is unable to achieve his dream of owning his own house under his own name. I fear for the day that I see my pa "like an oak tree leaning from its tired years" (Uribe, 2016). It's heartbreaking to watch my pa work every day. I want him to rest and enjoy the life he has. My mom is unable to visit her family in Mexico after 20 years. It is as if they are trapped. Como dice el poema de Carmen, "Vivir aquí es querer estar alla. Estar alla es querer estar aqui" (Christoph, 2014). My parents, along with the other thousands of hardworking families, fear that one day they will be arrested for living on stolen land. However, my parents never let their citizenship status define them. They are proud Mexicanos living in America. My parents are hopeful for their futuro. CRGS has shown me the ugly of America, but I am hopeful. Hopeful for the day my parents become "legal" citizens of the United States. That status will mean everything to them. Even when this country has made my parents feel as if they deserve less, my parents have always provided a space where I feel welcomed and loved. They have always made me feel proud of who I am. Mexicana, Chicana, Latina, yo soy la hija de Revocata y Modesto Zamora.

George Floyd's death is a consequence of the years of institutionalized and systemic racism in our country. Black and brown bodies are at a higher risk of police brutality. When I tried to explain to my parents why people were angry and disappointed, they didn't fully understand. Until I showed them how George Floyd was murdered, my mom cried and thought about the children in our country. Escondido is one of the many cities that suffer from over-surveillance. Escondido is filled with beautiful brown bodies, yet society sees us as criminals. This is why I joined my community when protests were held at City Hall or at the Escondido Police Department. I will not stay silent. I will use my knowledge and my privilege to educate

others about our corrupt and capitalistic society. I went to La Mesa, San Diego's peaceful protest that ended up with cops throwing tear gas right in front of us. There were children and families at that protest. In Escondido, a peaceful protest was organized by a 15-year-old Black student. There were people from my high school, my family members, my community gathered to fight against systemic and institutionalized racism. I joined my community when they held a protest in front of Escondido's Police Department. There was a literal cement barrier between the armed cops and the peaceful protesters. Escondido has given me a perspective and a space where I have found my voice. My voice is for my people, for all people that have been forced to be silenced.

Escondido is my home. It's a space where I feel like I belong. With my Tios and my Tias around, I have my family, my people, and my culture with me. Escondido, mi comunidad, y mi familia son parte de mi, son mis raíces.

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