

I am Joaquin /Yo Soy Joaquin

"I am Joaquin" was written by Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, a Chicano activist from Denver, Colorado in 1967. After a brief career as a professional boxer, Gonzales became a leading figure in the Chicano Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. In the poem, Joaquin (the narrator) speaks of the historical triumphs, struggles, and inherent contradictions experienced by Mexicans and Mexican Americans. He dedicated this poem to the younger generation of Mexican Americans.

Yo soy Joaquin.
I am Cuauhtémoc, proud and noble,
leader of men, king of an empire civilized
beyond the dreams of the gachupín Cortés,
who also is the blood, the image of myself.

I was part in blood and spirit of that
courageous village priest
Hidalgo who rang the bell of independence
and gave out that lasting cry--
El Grito de Dolores
"Que mueran los gachupines y que viva la
Virgen de Guadalupe..."
I sentenced him who was me I
excommunicated him, my blood.

I am Joaquin.
I rode with Pancho Villa,
crude and warm, a tornado at full strength,
nourished and inspired by the passion and
the fire of all his earthy people.
I ride with revolutionists
against myself.

I have been the bloody revolution,
The victor,
The vanquished.
I have killed
And been killed.
I am the despots Díaz
And Huerta
And the apostle of democracy,
Francisco Madero.

I rode east and north
As far as the Rocky Mountains,
And
All men feared the guns of
Joaquín Murrieta.
I killed those men who dared
To steal my mine,
Who raped and killed my love
My wife.
Then I killed to stay alive.

I stand here looking back,
And now I see the present,
And still I am a campesino,
I am the fat political coyote--
I,
Of the same name,
Joaquín.

In a country that has wiped out
All my history,
Stifled all my pride,
In a country that has placed a
Different weight of indignity upon my age-
old burdened back.
Inferiority is the new load . . .

I look at myself
And see part of me
Who rejects my father and my mother
And dissolves into the melting pot
To disappear in shame.

La raza!
Méjicano!
Español!
Latino!
Chicano!
Or whatever I call myself,
I look the same
I feel the same
I cry
And
Sing the same.

I am the masses of my people and
I refuse to be absorbed.
I am Joaquín.
The odds are great
But my spirit is strong,
My faith unbreakable,
My blood is pure.
I SHALL ENDURE!
I WILL ENDURE!