

# Manifesting Myself

A discourse on the experience of intersectional identity

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The pages that follow are my mental response (and discourse) on the challenge of writing a manifesto, which I chose as a final assignment in Daniel Borzutzky's Latin American studies class and one which I took with much joy. As the challenge presented itself to me, my writing evolved from a manifesto to a deep rumination on my personal identity and the history of Americanism in Latin America. This is by no means a comprehensive historic or political account of Latin America or of the Latinx identity, but rather a process of self discovery, and as such, should be read as a work in progress. Within, you will find a mix of research, poetry, and journal entries; the poems will break into the literature as they broke into my mind, feeling the thoughts I was writing. By doing so, and including quotes and lyrics from Latinx music and poetry, I hope to offer a glimpse into what it feels like to be inside of an intersectional mind, logically American, emotionally Latino. The footnotes in this paper serve as annotations, bibliographies, and tangents; it can be read without accessing them, but to do so would allow the reader to deepen their understanding of the process which I went through to unpack and manifest my identity.

## A manifesto?

I find a lot of difficulty trying to order my thoughts when attempting to write this, because a manifesto contains so much more than the words of the writer, or of the movement, it contains their identity, their live and dead being, it contains a clear and manifested goal; manifesto's, one could say, gain a life of their own, and that feels heavy to me, like an immense privilege with an even greater responsibility. I feel unable to write a manifesto without having a clear idea of who I am, the clarity I yearn for is fogged behind the several masks I must wear in order to exist. Therefore I do not, cannot call this a manifesto, for that word carries a meaning on its back that I cannot bear to carry myself, just yet. A manifesto is a statement of beliefs, a dictatorial collection of thoughts and visions, which encompass either one or all areas of life. Manifestos have clear goals and obvious enemies.<sup>1</sup> Many groups find their meaning there, many individuals find their meaning there; The communist manifesto gathers the struggle of communists in a world where the proletariat will have no more of the bourgeoisie<sup>2</sup>, the Cannibalist Manifesto takes an aim at the colonial through a brazilian lens, it is sharp and fine, raw and real, scathingly deconstructing the colonial identity of brazil.<sup>3</sup> The Surrealists demanded of art what the mind has always contained, they are the spelunkers of consciousness, and they too have clearly defined goals, they have a group identity, a grain to fight; and while I have found only slices of my personal meaning within the complex code of existence, my enemies lie hidden within myself, my goals are fogged by the battle that ensues within my mental discourse, I cannot just yet order myself into a manifesto.

For I have beliefs, of course, almost all of us do, even if its believing that belief itself is a fallacy. But my beliefs right now are mostly opinions, mostly engrained and programmed into my mind by a social doctrine that I have begun to hate; and opinions are to me as cake is to the queen. Opinions are fools gold, bedazzled, illusional.<sup>4</sup> Before I can liberate myself fully, I must

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<sup>1</sup> Franzen Alexandra. *What is a manifesto?*. 2015. web.

<sup>2</sup> Marx Karl, Engels Frederick. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. 1848. Vol. One, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1969, pp. 98-137

<sup>3</sup> De Andrade Oswald. *Cannibalist Manifesto*. 1928

<sup>4</sup> Stark Herman. "Philosophy of the Fine" Art Institute of Chicago. 2014

submit these beliefs to the highest order of scrutiny. I must cast them into the river of experience and knowledge, sifting through research and history so they can be refined and tumbled into the ideas I hope to one day free into the world. If you were to task me with writing a manifesto two years, even six months ago (before I re-accessed and re-validated my Latino identity) I would have crumbled under the pressure, I would not know where to turn so I can escape my shame, disdain and inner disbelief. Now, I want to speak my truth, I have found a language, a tongue that cannot be tamed, and it rages like fire within me. It is through the powerful writings of Octavio Paz, Aimé Césaire, Oswald de Andrade, Julia de Burgos, Pedro Pietri, and many other Latinx writers that I found the linguistic tools to express the feelings of disparity, brokenness, and intersectionality that I have grappled with my entire life. Through them, and thanks to them, I finally feel ready to pull at the chords of my being and unmask myself. I am ready to cannibalise my colonial self and reap from it what I have shamed myself for containing.

I guess more than a manifesto, this can be read as a pre-manifesto, as an attempt to manifest myself past the archetypes that have bonded me for so long.

## Latinx: Unmasking

I am part Guatemalan, part european, part american, and economic experiment as a whole. Growing up in Guatemala seems odd in retrospect, because a part of me feels so american, and a part of me doesn't, that part wants more Guatemala, yearns for more, calls for more. And here I dig it out and let it breathe:

Ahora todos mis pensamientos me dan pena,  
America America, recogí tu bandera  
toda palabra, todas mi preferencias,  
mis ídolos falsos,  
Me los dististeis tu

mi música, mis libros, mis autorxs, mis poetas, mis palabras, mi lenguaje, mis letras, mis  
plumas, mi escritura,  
mis escultorxs, mis pintorxs, mis pinturas, mis museos, mis escuelas, mis profesorxs, mis  
directorxs, mis secretaxis, mis padres, mis madres,  
mi casa, mi cuna, mis paredes  
Mi miel  
Cubierta en tu mantel

Donde en la mesa de mi cabeza  
Tú voz reza por cazar a mi identidad como presa

mi patria, mi unión, mi constitución, mi gobierno, mis montañas, mis ríos, mis lagos, mis  
pueblos, mis municipalidades, mis playas, mi ruina y mi concretó, mi mito y mi mentira,  
mi bandera sangrienta, mi Guatemala  
mi calle,  
Mi suciedad,

Mi miedo,  
Mi pobreza,  
Mi riqueza  
Mis escapadas, mis caminadas

Mis shukos, mi milpa, mi plátano y banano frito, mis dulces tipicos, mi semana santa, mi  
horchata, mi hielo raspado, mis labios empalagosos, mis puntas pegajosas, mis mercados, mis  
libras, mis manojos, mis vendedores, mis compradores, mis moscas, mi agua de coco, mi

mango con pepitoria, mi naranja con limón y sal, mis chuchitos, mis tamales, mi bracelets, mis  
madres mayas, mi payaso pordiosero, mis camionetas, mi metro, mis taxis, mi quinta avenida,

mi avenida de las americas,

mi acueducto, mi museo de los niños, mi zoológico la aurora, mi pobre elefante triste, mis  
caballos de madera, mis monos enojados por enjaulados, mi tristeza

mi mercado al final, mis globos bien virgos, mi abuela y su carro, mi felicidad

mi plaza central, mi catedral, mis paredes oscurecidas por el humo, mis fumadores, mis  
cigarros, mi olor de los puros de mi "abuelo" y el incienso de las iglesias

Mi Semana Santa,  
El azerrin y la procession de jesus,  
Esclavos a la santa palabra

mis dolores, mis lágrimas madrigales, mis lacrimógenos viajes hacia la eterna primavera,

mi camino largo, mis escenas pintorescas, mis tuneles arbolientos,  
mis carreteras serpentinadas que se escurren por las montañas del Quetzal,

Mi bello espejo ondulante, mi pies mojados, mis viajes en tiburonera, mi San Pedro, mi San  
Juan, mi Panajachel, mi libertad momentánea,

Mi regreso,  
Mis deseos,  
Mis preocupaciones,  
Mis penas

Mi frente

Mis ojos

Mi nariz y mis orejas

Mi boca

Mi cuello

Mi pecho y mis hombros

Mi estomago y mi antebrazo

Mis manos, mis caderas, mi pene, mis bolas,

Mis piernas,

Mis camotes,

Mis pies,

Mis dedos,

Todos un escenario para tu maldito carnaval  
Todo mi ser creado para ser firmado en tu contrato:

I don't feel of a nation, i don't feel of a peoples, i cannot identify with a culture besides that of my personal history, i was born in Guatemala and lived there my whole life with the unearthing desire to become American, i was seduced by the American sales gimmick since i can't remember wearing a lot of songs, i watch the movies and shows, i hold tight to my american identity, i can't find a better spring

Which now seems a little odd since i want to escape to america for a better american culture, i found their escape in Guatemala, i always met people who were Guatemaltecos, i lived there for a while, i loved the music of the 60s, i wore a hat like Huey Lewis, i read the Newsday, i was seduced by the American sales gimmick since i can't remember wearing a lot of songs, i watch the movies and shows, i hold tight to my american identity, i can't find a better spring

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<sup>5</sup> I don't feel "of" a nation, i don't feel of a peoples, i cannot identify with a culture besides that of my personal history, i was born in Guatemala and lived there my whole life with the unearthing desire to become American, i was(...)



“This predominance of the closed over the open manifests itself not only as impassivity and distrust, irony and suspicion, but also love for Form”<sup>6</sup>

México, Belice, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panamá Colombia, Ecuador, Perú, Venezuela, Brasil, Surinam, Bolivia, Paraguay, Chile, Uruguay, Guyana, Guyana Francesa, Cuba, Las Bahamas y todas las islas caribeñas, were once without the economic union that binds them today. Now they stand as countries bordered by the bureaucracy that has turned many of them into political prostitutes. Latin America has historically been a bystander to the military investments of those new conquistadors like Milton Friedman and Ronald Reagan, it is no surprise that their experience is so similar, that they all share a love for Form. Octavio Paz writes of this love for Form from a mexican lens, but i would like to expand that lens to Latin America as a whole, for we share a love for the false primordial, The A-bomb, the American form, the false hero of the new colonial<sup>7</sup>; written in its own manifesto: Neoliberalism. Those closer to the blast radius have suffered the most, shockwave after shockwave of revolutions turned military governments, never ending economic and political enslavement. treated as less than nations, they were the testing facilities for the american poison and cure.<sup>8</sup>

“Only a crisis--actual or perceived--produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around.”

-Milton Friedman<sup>9</sup>

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(...) seduced by the American sales gimmick since i can remember, wearing the clothes, singing the songs, watching the movies and shows, holding tight to all and any americans I could find in the land of Eternal Spring. Which now seems a little odd since I wanted to escape to america, but Americans found their escape in Guatemala. Now i find it interesting that we always met at the crossroads of our Eden. The Beatles, AC/DC, Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, Huey Lewis and the News, The Eagles, Lynyrd Skynyrd, they wrote my anthems. My legends: El Chavo del Ocho, the rivalry of Goku and Vegeta, the adventures of Jimmy Neutron, the pot fueled anti-capitalist doctrine of Uncle Bill, the stories of la llorona y el sombrero, and the revolutionary spirit of el Abuelo Willy, which my mother always spoke so proudly of. My father feels more Guatemalan than my mother, she absolutely despises this place and its peoples, I don't blame her given the experience of prosecution and abuse she went through here. Something I blame on the consequence of both her female identity and her sense of being, she is in Guatemala as is an eagle in a cage. At either time of their lives they both studied in America, my mother went to school in virginia, my father graduated from university at Texas A&M. My feasts, turkey and pizza, barely celebrating the real food around me. My pilgrimage was texas, my safe space was English, always waiting for houston, houston, houston. I have only prismatic glimpses of Guatemala, ones I have come to hold closer and more dear to my corazon as time moves on. The deeper I look the more I find the american label, the more I dig through the pages of this social doctrine, the less I find of myself, and the more I yearn to regain the Chapino identity I sold off to American “freedom”. All of this makes my words feel half empty or half full most of the time, but never full, never all there, just faint specs in an indifferent gradient. If this train of thought seems jarring and broken, that is because my identity feels jarring, it feels fragmented and vacuum formed to the american flag.

<sup>6</sup>Paz, Octavio. *Labyrinth of Solitude*. Penguin Books Ltd, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Capitalism

<sup>8</sup> Klein, Naomi. *The Shock Doctrine: the Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. Vintage Canada, 2008.pp 1-15

<sup>9</sup> Klein, Naomi. *The Shock Doctrine: the Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. Vintage Canada, 2008.pp 1

Chile had Pinochet and suffered the most documented example of Neoliberal Shock Treatment, seen as the oasis for privatization and de-regulation, it is now a thriving nation but at what expense? At the countless numbers of silenced victims? at the voice of Chileans and their freedom, at the expense of their rights? So one nation could thrive before all? Guatemala had Arbenz and Ríos Montt, they were the children guarding the playground for American research and exploit. The Banana Fruit Company did what they wanted with our lands. They exported their philosophies and fleets of Ford Falcons to suppress and exile any who stood in the way of the machine; And now they sell us back the fruits that grow from our soils. Our countries are the grow rooms for American consumerism, we make their clothes, we grow their greens, we produce their fibers and cloths at the price of children and de-regulated, cheap labor; we fulfill the promises of supply and demand. The United States has always had an intense hunger for expansion, Latin America has always been the most eligible prey for their end.

The United States has historically taken steps to infiltrate and puppeteer Latin America, putting the US before all in their affairs, creating domestic policy that keeps us from staying; and foreign policy that weakens our countries and makes us leave, forcing our people to do anything and everything to get into Gringolandia, donde ay trabajo y oportunidad.

i dare speak for those whose experience is not my own, i am by no means an immigrant who has had it hard, i am white, i came to the United States to go to school, my parents blessed me with the gift of sending me, and i am even more blessed to be able to afford it. My whole life i learned how to be American, i was trained like a spy, unrecognizable from my people, incognito to maintain my safety.<sup>10</sup> Regardless, those people crossing with bare minimum, dying to get where i am, are here for the same freedom i am so close to achieving. My whole life i have followed the program and played by the system, and now that i am so close to winning, i want to do nothing but break the fucking game. Because for all of the pleasures and luxuries that it offers it leaves a wake of death, poverty, and illiteracy in its path. i refuse to look forward without them, they are my people and although our struggle is vastly different, we still share the same road, our grain is the same, our objectives similar, nosotros somos Latinos; thus, to know a history and not retell it is to betray it.<sup>11</sup>

“Look how far I come”<sup>12</sup>

“Racists feed the belly of the beast  
With they pitchforks, rich chores  
Done by the people that get ignored”

“You claim I'm stealing jobs though

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<sup>10</sup> i was schooled in their history, i was taught to maneuver the language better than my native tongue, i went to “highschool” and not a “colegio”, i couldn't wait to go to summer camp in Texas.

<sup>11</sup> The “I” in this paragraph is intentionally taken off capitalization, because i believe individualism and the overtly narcissistic I of English is counterproductive when speaking of a community wide struggle.

<sup>12</sup> Song. Immigrants (We Get the Job Done). Residente, Snow Tha Product, K'naan +3.

Peter Piper claimed he picked them, he just underpaid Pablo”<sup>13</sup>

Latinx identity is sprawling with stories of the power struggle that they encounter as they exist under the grasp of American economic rule.

“Por tierra o por agua  
Identidad falsa  
“Brincamos muros o flotamos en balsas  
La peleamos como Sandino en Nicaragua  
Somos como las plantas que crecen sin agua  
Sin pasaporte americano  
Porque la mitad de gringolandia es terreno mexicano  
Hay que ser bien hijo de puta  
**Nosotros les sembramos el árbol y ellos se comen la frutas**  
Somos los que cruzaron  
Aquí vinimos a buscar el oro que nos robaron  
Tenemos mas trucos que la policía secreta  
Metimos la casa completa en una maleta  
Con un pico, una pala  
Y un rastrillo  
Te construimos un castillo”<sup>14</sup>

I want to say the words identity, belonging, self, sense of place, determination.

Realidad.

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<sup>13</sup>Song. Immigrants (We Get the Job Done). Residente, Snow Tha Product, K’naan +3. This part was written by Snow Tha Product, an American Latinx Female rapper and lyricist

<sup>14</sup> Song. Immigrants (We Get the Job Done). Residente, Snow Tha Product, K’naan +3. Part written by Residente, a hip hop producer, writer, and poet of Colombian origin, widely known for his participation in the group, Calle 13  
Translation:

“By land or sea  
False identity  
We jump walls or float on rafts  
We keep up a fight like Sandino in Nicaragua  
We are like the plants that grow without water  
Without American passport  
Because half of gringolandia is mexican terrain  
We have to be real mutherfuckers  
**Because we planted the tree and they eat the fruit**  
We are those who crossed  
We came here to look for the gold that was stolen  
We have more tricks than secret police  
We packed the whole house in a suitcase  
With a pickaxe, a shovel  
And a rake  
We built you a castle”

But that realidad is broken into pedazos, illegible past a label and a price tag.  
Confused between one world imprisoned in the bondage of another.

It is hard to express the inner complexities of this identity without bringing about a sense of anger and absolute disgust, because it is almost unbelievable that such a wide range of people have had a similar experience of oppression and need for survival and yet little has been done to correct this. You see, in the end we (and our cultures) will never really be american, our borders and countries allow the United States to enforce a policy and a type of diplomacy they dare not impose upon their own citizens. Forever we were thought of as "America's backyard". The Latinx is forced to do and accomplish what no group within the american border is willing to do; we have no time for rights, we have only time to feed and help our families back home. This creates an easy work force for america, one that is willing to do any job for extremelly cheap, one you dont have to protect and regulate because their very presence in this country is a reason for you to get rid of them. Industries can and will do anything with this cheap labor. This is hardly something that went unrecognized in the history of the united states and is why the borders were opened up in the 1950's and a stock of work visas wer given to mexicans at the time. From this forward, There have been numerous stories of Latinos hired for work and fired or even deported before payday, of conditions in fields and farms that should have been abolished along with slavery; yet they still exist, transfered from one ethnic group to another.

Pedro Pietri presents us with the telling of this Broadly Latinx struggle in his piece "Puerto Rican Obituary", particularly from the lens of a Puerto Rican experience:

**They worked  
They were always on time  
They were never late  
They never spoke back  
when they were insulted  
They worked  
They never took days off  
that were not on the calendar  
They never went on strike  
without permission  
They worked  
ten days a week  
and were only paid for five  
They worked  
They worked  
They worked  
and they died  
They died broke  
They died owing  
They died never knowing**

## **what the front entrance of the first national city bank looks like**

It takes even the slightest drop of honesty to see that there is no shortage of documentation on the struggle of the Latinx in the United States, of the absolutely sub-human treatment that we underwent in order to participate in a world economy; and yet, in the blue-eyed orange face of adversity, Latinx's still have this amazing amount of determination, of perseverance, soul, and an inspiring sense of loyalty to their purpose.

But what does it mean to be a Latinx in the united states, to be part of this massive and ongoing migration? It means that my duty as a Latinx is to tener ORGULLO, to promote self determination for all Latino's and to do whatever I can to give opportunities and a voice to any and all Latinx who come here. For this I would like to pull from the second point on the 13 point program of the Young Lords Organization<sup>15</sup>:

**"2. We want selfdetermination for all Latinos.** Our Latin Brothers and Sisters, inside and outside the united states, are oppressed by amerikkkan business. The Chicano people built the Southwest, and we support their right to control their lives and their land. The people of Santo Domingo continue to fight against gringo domination and its puppet generals. The armed liberation struggles in Latin America are part of the war of Latinos against imperialism. Que Viva La Raza!

### **La Meta**

There are countless amounts of Latinx's that have both begun and joined a movement for the self-determination of their specific ethnic groups and of all Latinx's in the world. This shall heed as a calling to myself to finally find a place where I belong, to put all of this language and thinking into action, to finally enjoy and promote the Chapino that has been hiding within me forever.

"Down with the importers of all canned conciousness"<sup>16</sup>

"Down with the vegetable elites. In comunication with the soil"<sup>17</sup>

"We already had communism. We already had surrealist language. The Golden Age"<sup>18</sup>

"Down with the histories of Man that begin at Cape Finisterre. The undated world. Unrubrified. Without Napoleon. Without Caesar."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The Young Lords Organization (YLO) is a Puerto Rican turf gang turned political party and militant group, present in major cities of the United States including Chicago and New York during the 1970's, a period of intense struggle and civil discourse for Puerto Rican's and Latino's

<sup>16</sup> De Andrade Oswald. *Cannibalist Manifesto*. 1928. pp39

<sup>17</sup> De Andrade Oswald. *Cannibalist Manifesto*. 1928. pp 40

<sup>18</sup> De Andrade Oswald. *Cannibalist Manifesto*. 1928. pp 40

<sup>19</sup>De Andrade Oswald. *Cannibalist Manifesto*. 1928. pp 41

“Down with the antagonistic sublimations. Brought here in caravels”<sup>20</sup>

“Down with the truth of missionary peoples, defined by the sagacity of a cannibal, The Viscount of Cairu: -its a lie told again and again”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> De Andrade Oswald. *Cannibalist Manifesto*. 1928. pp 41

<sup>21</sup> De Andrade Oswald. *Cannibalist Manifesto*. 1928. pp 42

More now than ever, aesthetics rule out perception, our reward mechanisms, and our way of communicating. We have expedited the long process of photography and in an act of semantic synthesis we have created a visual form of communication like no other. A form of new hyreoglyph, a moving, breathing hyreoglyph. In under a minute I can have body language communication with another person on the other side of the globe. Never have we en mass had to pay such attention to our aesthetic qualities.<sup>22</sup> I wonder, what of those épocs when mirrors were panes of still water and not silver coated glass? What of those times without the chokehold of colonialism? What is an identity seen through polished bronze, seen through uncolonized eyes? Through painting in the classical sense, in the baroque, the expressionist, the digital? How does identity become or come from these ways of viewing ourselves and eachother?

How much agency do we have?

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<sup>22</sup> Although, that is not entirely true, every era has had its aesthetic rule, expressed through a culture's many rituals, dresses, script, and pretty much any form of expression.

Standards of beauty

Disguise

Sharade

Aesthetic comfort

Digital blanket

Pixelated night light

Aesthetic pleasure reward

Aesthetic pleasure as a physical pleasure

As a physical response, the brain is physical.

This is not attempt to make state anything but only a collection of my thoughts and questons on life, this is a pre-manifesto.

A pre manifesto to what?

This is my attempt to answer that question,

1)<https://uteach.utexas.edu/uteach-blog/consequences-und>



We have always been aesthetic beings,  
Always our eyes bonded to a standard, a color, a myth.

An idol.

Those who cannot see it, hear it.

those who can't do either:

(are they more bonded? Or set free?)  
What is a life of death next to el dia de los muertos?

World Idol, world war,  
American Idol, american war  
oops i did it again.

What happens when you have a society consumed by what they  
create?

I want to say the words identity, belonging, self, sense of place, determination.  
Realidad.

But that realidad is broken into pedazos, illegible past a label and a price tag.  
Confused between one world imprisoned in the bondage of another.

Bien agringado, bien fucktopeado, pero bien.  
Si ni en mis calles camine, si ni mis libros lei, si mi idolo americano me mintio?

Here i am, being of price tags, bar code skins. Me cuesta hablar el idioma de mi madre.

Toda cosa Guatemalteca y Maya que se interpreto en mi mundo fue vulgar o misteriosa.

Crecí en la misma burbuja que contenía a ese baby jesus que mantenía mi madre en la  
mesa de la sala, en un vidrio, behind panes of bulletproof glass.

All secrets were english, all secrets were above  
"ignorance"

Vine con pocas maletas,  
But i still have so much damn shit to unpack.

Colonialism, una palabra historica.

Colonialismo, a painful word.

America  
Where you

erfunding-our-public-schools