

Kristiana Colón (1986)

a remix for remembrance for my students

This is for the boys whose bedrooms are in the basement,
who press creases into jeans, who carve their names in pavement,
the girls whose names are ancient, ancestry is sacred
The Aztec and the Mayan gods abuela used to pray with

This is for the dangerous words hiding in the pages
of composition notes, holy books and Sanskrit

This is for the patients who wait for medication
for the mothers microwaving beans and rice at day's end

This is for the marching bands and girls at quinceañeras
The skaters and the writers whose moms are eloteras,
laughing "Cops don't scare us, we sag so elders fear us
We will rewrite our textbooks in our own language if you dare us"

This is for the Sarahs, the Angelicas, and Shawns,
the Beatrices, Paolas, Danielas, and the dawns
we scribble sunlight in the margins of horizons with our songs
for all the voices tangled with the silence on our tongues

Rivals in the parks, fireworks at dark,
tired shirts that sweat your scent on hangers in the closet
For the boys who fix the faucet while their sister fixes coffee
'cause mommy had to leave for work at 6 AM and laundry
isn't folded yet: you don't have to hold your breath

You don't have to behave. Stage your own rebellion
paint canvases with rage, and religion, and prayers for pilgrims
sleeping in the train cars at the border and their children
Filibust the Senate and bust markers on the Pink Line
Stain the prosecution's case and force the judge to resign,
force the crowd to rewind the lyrics you invented

Speak away the limits to heights of your existence
Be a witness, be a record, be a testament, a triumph
Set your poems flying in the glitter of the planets
Feed open mouths with truth, the truth is we are famished
The Universe is starving for the symphonies you play
Clarinet and thunder and the syllables you say
are the instruments: you are infinite. Stretch your hands to heaven
Let your throat throttle the rhythms of all your fallen brethren
Your legacy is present, your history is now
You are the tenth degree of sound
You are the nephews of the sky
You are the bass line and the hi hat and the snare drum and the cry
of red Septembers. You're the architects of winter
You are the builders of the roads that you're told you don't remember
You are the builders of the roads that you're told you don't
remember
You are the builders of the roads that you're told you don't
remember

Cast poems in the river and tell them you remember
Skate City Hall to splinters and tell them you remember
Send diamonds to your islands and tell them you remember
Find your God inside your mirror and tell Her you remember