

Lessons

Jose Mendivil

We Skins taught not to talk perfect English
expected to speak in run on accents
told to drink wine like a glass of draft
drink wine like the way you put on pants in the morning,

They say use needles and go to Winston Street in Skid Row
where I draw my tribe on wall along pissed up alley by 4th Street
Member of city Clan expected to speak in microphone
at gymnasium Pow Wow so he can tell non-Indians
and Relocatee Breeds and Skins what we do.

College student won't dance in circle without her shawl
Chicana next to me asks what the drummers are singing about
I don't know, I won't ask
We Skins expected to be traditional.

We are trained to honor others at amusement parks
We Skins trained to honor weeping actor next to trashed river
Indians are suppose to say I have uncle who fought in the War and
he smokes weed and rides his horse with a high
out in the desert all day long.

Nana, Tata *
teach me to scalp their treaties
burn and loot their promises
circle their boarding schools
Teach me to read their lips.

* Grandmother, Grandfather