

No Soy de Aquí, Ni Soy de Allá

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No soy de aquí, ni soy de allá. I am a son of immigrant parents who carries Mexican blood from the states of Durango and Jalisco. I was born in the United States of America, but I have struggled to find my place in this country and in this world. Although I am living in a country that has provided my family and me with many opportunities, I went through an identity crisis in my early twenties. My complicated ambiguous identity stems from the dishonorable branches of political will and the indifferent universe, as both are external factors taking control of whatever free will I think I have. I was not born out of necessity nor choice and my existence happened to be pushed in an arbitrary direction. To further explain, the boundaries of citizenship, the social conditions of society, and the hunger for power from the previous millenniums, led up to the moment of me being born within the boundaries of what is now known as the United States of America. More precisely, I was born in the city of San Bernardino and my identity as a human being has been subtly dictated by my citizenship. However, these facts about myself do not serve as a guide for my life and it is merely irrelevant as it pertains to my subsistence. It would not make any sense to simplify my true essence into a hollow box of insignificant political labels. So, what am I exactly?

I have always considered myself to be a Mexican American, given that I was born on American soil and my roots stem from Mexico. However, the way I identified myself became ambiguous. Rather than having a sense of identity, I became a stranger possessing every shade of gray as I plunged into a sea of confusion. My relatives and friends who reside in Mexico refuse to accept me as Mexican due to the fact that I was not born in the country of Mexico. I did not understand how being born in the United States negated my identity as a Mexican. After all, it was just a piece of land, but apparently your birthplace has the potential to overlook one's family culture, heritage, and roots. Not only was I hurt, but it left a psychological scar on my psyche. To make matters worse, people in America do not even think I am American. I am consistently referred to as a Mexican due to my black hair, brown eyes, brown skin, and Spanish background. Not only did this make me feel alienated, but it also misplaced me in my own labyrinth. I was somewhere in between but unlike purgatory, there was no path towards salvation or damnation. The sense of darkness consumed me as if my eyes had been completely ripped out. I lost myself in this internal maze and it suffocated who I thought I was. To my relatives and friends in Mexico, I was not the embodiment of Pancho Villa, Benito Juarez, Frida Kahlo, Pedro Infante, or anything of the Mexican culture. To them, I was the embodiment of American culture: Thanksgiving, Hollywood, the English language, football, and anything

else representing the American ideal. If I was not able to find my place in the country I was born in or in the country that my family possessed roots in, then I figured it would be impossible to find my place anywhere in the world. So, what am I exactly?

This feeling of estrangement throughout my life motivated me to ask deeper questions as I got older. My confusion was not to question whether I was really Mexican, American, or Mexican American, but my confusion was to question the concept of identity. Through these vague shades of meaning, I realized that basing one's identity on what is known as nationality or citizenship, is an absurd bureaucratic concept.

An accident during my fourth year of undergraduate studies unintentionally steered me into igniting the question of my existence and my identity when I had to visit the *Museum of Man*, which is now known as the *Museum of Us*, in San Diego. I had to write about the personal experience I gained during this trip, but I randomly decided to approach the infamous border wall to see it for my own eyes. It is safe to say that I did not go to the Museum of Us as being at the border transformed my trip into a day of contemplation about figuring out who I was, what the world was, and what the idea of identity meant.

From a distance, the border was visible, spanning miles from East to West and finally meeting its end, numerous feet into the Pacific Ocean. The rusted steel beams were silent, but at the same time, their appearance radiated a sense of intimidation. Saturated with sweat, I arrived at the Border Field State Park. Drips of sweat slowly plunged from the bottom of my chin and found relief on the cold dirt, as I escaped my car's smoldering heat. The cold ocean breeze caressed my body making the heat bearable as I began to walk towards the white concrete path leading onto the beach shore. The concrete path and the border were parallel to each other, several feet apart and as I continued to walk, the music of Chalino Sanchez drifted across the border and filled my ears with the sound of Mexico. The more I walked towards the beach shore, the more I was able to see into Tijuana through the gaps between the steel beams. Through these gaps, I saw the city filled with life: beautiful people roamed around the colorful energetic atmosphere, children walking with their parents pointed their innocent fingers towards the border, people were taking pictures, and others cheerfully waved at me. As I waved back, the smell of Tijuana floated through the border, and it mixed with the salty scent of the ocean, creating an even-tempered fragrance. In taking all this in, I began to think about my life and about how being born a couple of feet from this border, North or South, could make a significant difference in someone's life.

I stood several feet from the border and thought about the roots of civilization and how we got here. The sun was laying its heavy rays onto my skin, but I was too preoccupied with my thoughts to care about the sun scorching me. I

thought about the history of humans and how every intricate event since the birth of our species eventually steered towards this moment.

Earth did not inherit these absurd physical lines when it was first created by God or the universe. Rather, out of thin air humans arbitrarily structured the way of the world and turned it into something political. The border stretched into the Pacific Ocean, but the body of water told a different story. The water was one whole entity, swaying back and forth evoking a sense of harmony. The blue persistent waves calmly receded and advanced onto the pale shore, being apathetic to the steel beams trying to divide its natural spirit. My contemplation about figuring out who I was, what the world was, and what the idea of identity meant led me to one conclusion: we all have a place in the world regardless of how society decides to confine us.

My place and identity in this world as a human being were born out of an arbitrary series of events but nonetheless, my existence does not cease to be beautiful. I became indifferent to the world, but in my realm of indifference, I collect every petal of happiness along my journey. The criticisms I received previously in my life about who I was no longer matter to me as I refuse to bury myself under the absurd abstract ideas created by civilization. Like everyone else on this planet, I did not choose my place of birth or the color of my skin.

No soy de aquí, ni soy de allá. So, what am I exactly? I am the embodiment of humanity's greatest achievements and greatest failures.