

you  
can't  
take  
that  
away  
from  
me

Mi Vida Es Mía



Denise Díaz

## Letter Writing to the Readers

Hey there,

I made this zine for a class, but at the same time as a creative outlet for myself. The black and white photographs in my zine were taken by me. I love photography and it is a big part of who I am. As you go through the zine I want you to understand where I am coming from as these are my views as a Latinx woman in this fucked up world. We all have gone through some shit and its made us who we are. My zine is educational as well as personal. What you read here today I hope makes you think. As you read the zine think about your interactions with the Latinx community and how you can help or just be aware of your actions. I hope that after reading this zine you have a new perspective on life and how you treat others.

-Denise

### FACTS:

*Zoot Suit* (1981) and *La Bamba* (1987) by Luis Valdez

38% of Latinos in CA

63% of Latinos are born in the U.S.

In parts of the Southwest and Midwest, Mexican schoolchildren were placed in "Mexican schools," which ostensibly were created to "Americanize" them.

Film in the 1930s started stereotyping Latinos as the villains or the Latin lovers

*Stand and Deliver* (1988) by Ramón Menéndez

*Mi Familia* (1995) and *Selena* (1997) by Gregory Nava

46% of Latinos in NM

By 2050 , Latinos are projected to compose 29 percent of the nation's population.

The term Latino, however, is freighted with gender implications.

## Latin@ Vernacular Discourse

"Latin@ vernacular discourse (LVD) which concerns public discourse in visual, verbal, written, or performative forms produced from within Latin@ communities, advances epistemological claims about embodied acts of identity and culture, rhetorical struggles over identity construction, community formation, and strategies of resistance."-Holling & Calafell, "Tracing the Emergence of Latin@ Vernaculars in Studies of Latin@ Communication"



\*Images are screenshots from Google Maps\*

## In Los Angeles, California



All of these images are from my neighborhood and they are what I saw everyday growing up. I never really gave much thought to them until I came to Salem.

Living in Los Angeles I was able to be surrounded by so many people and grow up in a neighborhood where my neighbors looked like me. I just learned that LVD was all around me and its amazing to know that what I saw everyday and took for granted has helped me be appreciative of the arts as well as being proud of my ancestors and community members.




\*Images are screenshots from Google Maps\*



## CHILDHOOD PT.1


In high school I had two separate friend groups who mutually didn't like each other. I never really knew why and at that point in life I really didn't care. All I knew at that age was that I spoke **Spanglish** and that I was **white washed**. I am first generation in my family and because of this my parents never wanted my sister and I to speak Spanish as our first language. They prioritized speaking English at home , but this never stopped by grandparents from speaking Spanish to me. Thus whenever I would hang out with my Hispanic group of friends they would have conversations in Spanish and I would chime in with my Spanglish. This would always prompt them to say "damn Denise why you so white washed". By this point I had heard the term a million times throughout my life and it had only recently begun to sting.

White wash was a term that **Hispanics** would use on other Hispanics who displayed **assimilation** into the white culture. It is used a lot to make other Hispanics feel as though they aren't 'Hispanic enough'. Being **labeled** as white washed meant that you somehow didn't listen to Spanish **music** nor do you suffer like every other POC in this world. After a while you get used to these types of remarks.



## CHILDHOOD PT.2

Growing up my mother had nicknames for my sister and I and for some reason they would equate to Disney princesses. I don't know why and I never really asked her why but for some reason my nickname was Snow White. I never really had an issue with this growing up because I liked that fact that she thought I was as pretty as Snow White. As I got older I would stare at myself in the mirror and think that I was too dark and that I needed to be lighter like Snow White. At the time **pop culture** and magazines promoted fair skinned ladies as the ideal beauty. I grew up not wanting to get tan and obsessing over the color of my skin. It wasn't until my senior year of high school when I started to give less fucks about the color of my skin. I think part of this has to do with more and more Latinas popping up all over pop culture. Then coming to college in white ass Salem made me appreciate my skin color and be proud of what I look like. I don't care if I go out and tan even though I may look like a burnt chicken nugget. My skin color does not define my beauty nor my character.



*Juan Valdez (or “Why is a white guy like you named ‘Carlos?’”)*

*by Carlos Andrés Gómez*

after the show she asks me,  
“Carlos...Andreas Gomez ...is your stage name, right?  
I mean, I’ve never met a Hispanic who looks like you – so, what’s your real name? to which I reply,  
“...Zach, actually...Zach Morris – but I thought it would be a lot cooler to use a Spanish name. It’s a pretty smooth stage persona, though, isn’t it? And I’ll let you in on a little secret: I have much better luck with the ladies using it.”

she doesn’t laugh,  
maybe  
detects sarcasm  
sucks her teeth  
and leaves, offended

I’ve got a question for you, Princess Anonymous –  
What exactly does ‘a Hispanic’ look like?

Do I need to look like Juan Valdez and sell Folgers in a T.V. commercial, sift my fingers through Colombian coffee beans I picked myself, sitting on the back of my reliable mule, Conchita, next to a brokedown Chiva in an oversized sombrero,  
-- for me to “look” Latino?

or look like “a Hispanic” as you say?  
And what is “a Hispanic” exactly?

I could guess what you mean and assume that it’s a low-priced gardening tool like the one buried in a shed behind your Victorian summer home

or that invisible harvesting instrument that picks all of your grapes for you and has to survive on slave wage plantations without unions, bathroom breaks, or vacation

Or maybe when you say “a Hispanic” you mean your stand-in parent? That person who raises your kids for you when you’re tired of being a mom?

That mouthless set of infinite hands and knees that scrubs the shit from your toilets and throws away the used condoms when you forget to hide them

And I don’t have a backyard

Or a lover on the side, or kids for that matter,

So maybe I just haven’t come across “a Hispanic” thus far in my life

nor  
have I met “a black,” “a Chinaman,” or “a towel-headed A-rab” anytime recently either

but I have met Latinos

proud of the vibrant patch-work quilt we’ve had to weave over centuries across an endless cemetery that cradles our past, a swollen dust underneath our soles – wherever we stand – that we nickname home twisting roots at war, looking for nothing else but to be held – you know “held”?

Like a family grasping onto each other because they’ve left behind

everything and only have each other left, arriving on Mars without a guidebook or a map

I have met Latinos

who people think are Aboriginal in Patagonia, east Asian in Chile, west African in La República Dominicana, Scandinavian in Argentina, and Native American in Colombia

I have met Latinos

who look like Juan Valdez and can’t speak a word of Spanish, others who look like Hillary Duff with a mother who looks like Hillary Clinton that are from Paraguay and teach Spanish grammar in Puerto Rico,

Latinos

who speak Quechua and nothing else, dance cumbia like the horizon is on fire because of them and now they’re trying to burn tomorrow to the ground

I have met Latinos

who cook like their broken English moms and mispronounce their own last names, Colombians who don’t know who Gabriel García Márquez is, dark-skinned Dominicans who hate Haitians because they remind them that they’re

African, blue-eyed Cubans who spit poetry about ¡Revolución! and mean it – living in Miami with two parents who lost their mansions in the 1950s to it

I don’t tattoo my body because my veins are already too full with ink, passion-rich pigments that can’t help but pulse and flow

look at my heart, you short-sighted fool

I mean really look at it – cut open my chest and stare at that proud glow and then ask me if

I “look” Latino.



## The Brown @WU

My safe space is limited here at Willamette. I love the E&E and my room. Coming to Willamette and living in Salem has been a journey. I would love to give a shout out to all the POCs here that made me feel welcomed and at home. There aren't many of us here in this dominant white campus. All POCs need to be there for one another. Doing that for me has been getting involved with the OMA clubs on campus and going to meetings. If you're a POC who feels out of place or doesn't know where to go the E&E has always been welcoming from my experience. I know that it may not be true for other POCs and I am sorry for that. No POC should ever feel unwelcomed in the E&E and especially from other POCs. You shouldn't have anyone telling you that you're too loud and to shut up especially if its coming from another POC who preaches so much about being POC and solidarity. All in all I love my fellow brown friends here at WU and they make me feel at home most of the time.



\*Images from Alianza Club\*

## THE WHITE @WU

There are so many of you here. It's like everywhere I turn there you are. I never had an issue or noticed white people as much until I came to Willamette. Being from Los Angeles I had a diverse group of friends and got along with everyone, but being in this Willamette bubble has changed me. It made me see the things that have always been in front of me, but I never knew how to address them nor what to call them. Every year I figure out new things like when my white friend tells me I'm too loud or that I need to lower my voice I no longer comply, but instead give them a lesson on manners and that's all I am educating them on. Because POCs shouldn't have to educate the white people when they can just google it and yo mama should have taught you better. One last thing to all the white people, when you are in class with other POCs don't talk over us, don't talk down to us, and especially don't tell us what we have been through.



@willamette\_u



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SPACE

GOOGLE IT



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SPACE

GOOGLE IT



COMO TÚ. ESTOY ROBANDO ESPACIO COMO TÚ. ESTOY ROBANDO ESPACIO COMO TÚ. ESTOY ROBANDO ESPACIO COMO TÚ.

I am a proud Latina. I am a proud Latinx individual. I am Mexican-American. I am Chicana. I am my parents. I am my grandparents. I am the sweat and tears of my ancestors who have struggled so that I may be where I am. I am the hope that my family has for our future. I am the second person in my family to graduate from college along with my sister. I am a citizen. I am legal. I am just like you. I am a friend. I am a classmate. I am a resident advisor. I am a manager. I am a club member. I am student. I am photographer. I am an artist. I am and adult. I am a teen. I am a child. I am a dog lover. I am a cat lover. I am the loud person on the first floor of the library. I am that person in that group of friends who plans shit. I am an intelligent person. I am a human being. I am the person that holds the door for you. I am the person that would drop everything to help you out. I am the one that will share her notes. I am the one you confide in. I am many things.



@jonmap

But the one thing I am most is ME.



## PALABRAS

D J Y P R V I Z S D C R X W O U L Q I M K U Y R C  
 I B P O U A U P F T B D V D U T Y I R R M S Q W E  
 G L I P C R A S C R X P X S K K S X G V W K A W Z  
 T G T C V N Y Y I N W G J M Z A H V T G C Z U B O  
 O R U U G D L V C I N A P S I H F L W L Z O K L K  
 G T O L W Q V N S I F N K T K G J M O Y I A B Q Z  
 C A I T F U B L H C F L T I H V J G I F W W D Y K  
 L S L U I D D S F A M I L Y Q X G G G M Q G G A X  
 H O G R V K A Z T O S S R K N M A X K S Z N E P Q  
 Y L S E K W M V S J Q L V B L N M Y S K Y I J F Q  
 J F O A E E G I G K C M Y Z J O E G U V C T Q Q S  
 M K N T N Q H V K B X F A S S I M I L A T I O N R  
 D H I Q T G Z W R P X E C A P S Y L G V J R E C Y  
 J H N E O F E G M I F J Y V B Y A T A I W N I Q  
 W U J B Q G U L T L C O W N U O N T D N V R W F I  
 N P X E Q N J Z E R A M H V X A O I D B Y E L O Q  
 Z B P D Z W W N K S E B W M C E X N H Q Q T H B U  
 B U X V N O J A C X F P E I D M V X M O J T J T K  
 C K E O H A X M I I D G H L D Q W M S O L E R U Q  
 I T J L M S C C J D U C A C S D E X L T S L H K X  
 M L T T O Q O I X E S C K N Q T I C A X G X H V C  
 T X Q X Y Q W G R Z S H I E D N I C U S Q Q R V F  
 O Z W K G S Q N T E S I P L X B Q F T W H V A M X  
 A Q Q T W F R J B V M H H F T M C A I B V M O K C  
 W B G X X T Y U Q Y O A K M N Q D X R N B V Z Z T

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|---------------|--------------|
| AMERICA       | LOSANGELES   |
| ASSIMILATION  | LVD          |
| CHICANA       | MEXICO       |
| FAMILY        | POPCULTURE   |
| HISPANIC      | RITUALS      |
| LABELS        | SPACE        |
| LATINX        | SPANGLISH    |
| LETTERWRITING | WHITEWASHING |