

Jasmin A. Vargas

Where Am I From?

I am from pozole y enchiladas,
pescado frito y camarones a la diablo.
From monarch butterflies in the spring,
and midnight dancing by the beach.
I am from arroz con leche on rainy nights,
and coconut water on scorching days.

My parents, two opposing forces, are beings from different worlds.
Mother's ancestors were quiet, reserved indios,
Father's people were boisterous conquistadores of the seas.

My house is located on the corners of Chaos and Mayhem.
It is the big house with the huge yard and the towering grapefruit tree.
The one with glass windows and rusty pipe drains.
Perfect paint job on the outside with crumbling walls on the inside.

I am from sandalwood and Pine-Sol.
Aromas drifting from the kitchen mingle in the living room
with cigarettes and Grapefruit Citrus Body Wash.

I am from the streets of South Central L.A "where the rule an eye for an eye"
prevails in all aspects life.
Where honor marks the difference between a boy and a man.

I am from week-long wakes and overnight vigils.
Mother's hand held my limp fingers through the railings of the hospital bed.
I am from veladoras and incense
La Virgen's image and replicas of saints.
I am from doctors' hands and God's miracles.
I am from strangers' prayers and your embraces.

i was born dec. 23, 1984 to mexican immigrant parents. i've lived in south central los angeles all of my life. in 1990 i was diagnosed with leukemia at the age of 5 1/2. i received chemotherapy for nearly three years and in 1993 i went into remission. the cancer has not returned for nearly ten years, so i can honestly say i'm a survivor. i attended venice high school. i've been involved in a youth violence prevention program (Hollywood L.A Bridges Program) as well as a teen cancer support group (Teen Impact). both of these programs are under Children's Hospital of Los Angeles. my favorite place to be is at Camp Ronald McDonald for Good Times (it's a camp for children with cancer and their families). my three passions are reading, writing, and coconut creme frappuccinos from Starbucks. i have a fear of heights as well as a fear for red socks.

