

Making an Honest Living in the U.S.A.

by Marco Antonio Mar Jr.

You're always there—working. Passersby drive by without a care or notice you're there. The only reason they talk to you—or should I say, acknowledge you—is to gesture a wave indicating, no.



You're the windshield washer that stands on the corner of Fredericksburg Road intersecting Frontage Road underneath the I-10 highway near Beacon Hill. Instead of panhandling, you took up a trade. A trade known by many generations in your home country—our Mother country. You're an immigrant from Mexico, I can tell, you look like my parents. (More than likely you share the same values as my parents. Much respect to that, sir.)

Day in and day out while driving home from work, I see you there with a Windex bottle filled with your very own concoction of generic washing liquid (works better than Windex and environmentally friendly, I bet; the only thing those passersby care about). Every day, hundreds, maybe thousands speed by you and I wonder how many people genuinely acknowledge you and the meaning of the work you do.

Many argue that you come and take jobs from so called “Americans” whose ancestors once traveled by boat from an empire and King they wished to flee from long ago (remind you of anyone, passersby?). Windshield washer, you probably came to this country for the same reasons my parents did, to escape poverty, escape an extremely corrupt political system (as if America is better off), escape a government not working for the people, just like those “Americans” once did back in 1492.

Every day people refuse your windshield washing service; some hand you a few bucks; others won't even glance at you. Generally, there are more people that ignore you rather than acknowledge you. When we choose to ignore you, we ignore more than a windshield washer. We ignore the fact that you are not taking jobs away from Americans (I have yet to see a white male mix a homemade cleaning agent to wash windshields as a mean of making a few dollars every now and then, save for Mr. Clean, but he only stands there and lets the woman do all the work, never lifting a finger). They ignore the fact that instead of asking for money, you're working for your money just like they are. You're trying to make a decent living in an indecent world, where people discriminate, judge and hate based off of the color of your skin. (The only reason it's so brown is because you're out on the farms picking their organic fruits and vegetables! But, those passersby don't realize that.)

Those passersby ignore the fact that you're human just like they are; you're living, breathing and making an honest dollar, just like they are (or maybe not, white collar crimes typically involve embezzling money, a not so honest dollar). They ignore their indecencies and forget where they came from, but you? You know where you come from. The trade you utilize to make ends meet, to place food on your table, to buy clothing and provide shelter for yourself is proof of that you will never forget.

You see—growing up, my family would take trips to Mexico and there I would see many windshield washers providing for their families the same way you are here in the States. Windshield washer, you brought over this trade from the motherland, Mexico, and decided to use that trade to make an honest living in the United States of America. For that, I commend you and I write about you so that someone may realize that you are working hard and not a burden to society as some may think. ❖

Bio: Marco is a native Texan poet who grew up in the Rio Grande Valley and has lived in San Antonio for the last seven years. His passion for social justice issues inspires him to write.

My name is Liz Davila, I'm a leader with Texas Organizing Project (TOP); I reside in the same house I was raised in, in the Westside. My parents met and married in Eagle Pass; they moved and purchased the house I was raised in—in 1938.

They raised 10 children, 7 girls and 3 boys; I am the 7th born. My parents taught us to go to church, work hard, save your money and make sure to VOTE and never turn your back on family. I live in a unique neighborhood. Just on my block, 8 adult children have moved back with their parents to care for them. My neighbors and I have a special connection because we grew up together, we exchanged comic books and we cared for our parents. I tell you this because in the old neighborhoods we care for our families, regardless of whether we are related or not. We love our neighborhood and have NO plans on MOVING OUT.

We want to thank you for finally listening to us and doing for us. We might be poor but we count, we ARE HUMAN BEINGS. We will ALL have a WATCHFUL EYE on you to make sure you don't turn your backs on us and make sure you don't pull the rug out from underneath us.

The city spends up to \$10,000 on tearing down (demolishing) a home that needs repairs. Most of these people are seniors or low-income families that can barely pay their property taxes. These people end up letting go of the property and in place of a home, there is now an empty lot.

The city NEEDS to invest the demolition fees into home rehabilitation. Why let those demolition fees go unpaid; you are just throwing our taxpayer money away. We are infested by empty lots—put our money where it counts—into home rehabilitations. ❖

