

Acknowledgements

Red Salmon Arts gratefully recognizes the folks who made this publication possible:



Funding is provided in part by the City of Austin under the auspices of the Austin Arts Commission and the Texas Commission on the Arts.



Also, sponsorship was provided in part by the Red Salmon Arts/UT Center for Mexican American Studies partnership through the administrative internship program; and principal Linda Van Horne and Burnet Middle School (AISD) for supporting the Save Our Youth project.

So Look at Me Now

A Collection of Poetry
by Students from Burnet Middle School

Edited by Lilia Raquel Rosas and raúlsalinas



Red Salmon Press
Salmoncito Series
2005

Austin (UT Austin) Center for Mexican American Studies Administrative Intern for RSA. She also is a doctoral candidate in history at UT Austin, specializing in comparative ethnic and queer studies, and coalitional politics. Along with co-facilitating writing clinics with youth from marginalized communities and assisting with SOY programming, Lilia is experienced in other areas of public education. She has taught U.S. history, civic, and English-language classes to immigrant adults for the immigration outreach center One Stop Immigration in Riverside, California. She has worked as a teaching assistant for the Department of History, the Center for African and African American Studies, and the Center for Asian American Studies; tutored in Intercollegiate Athletics for Men and Women; and worked as a supplemental instructor for the UT Learning Center, all at UT Austin.

About the Editors

raúlsalinas

Xicanindio elder poet and human rights activist raúlsalinas is the Executive Director of Resistencia Bookstore/Casa de Red Salmon Arts (RSA). In addition, he also conducts intensive creative writing clinics locally and throughout the country with disenfranchised youth. These clinics are held in conjunction with a variety of arts organizations, correctional facilities, and social service agencies. raúlsalinas' work with various political movements has earned him an international reputation as an eloquent spokesperson for justice. He has worked extensively with the American Indian Movement and the International Indian Treaty Council. raúlsalinas is the author of four poetry collections *Viaje/Trip* (chapbook), *Un Trip Through the Mind Jail, East of the Freeway*, and the forthcoming *Indio Trails: A Xicano Odyssey through Indian Country* (Wings Press) as well as two spoken word CDs *Los Many Mundos of raúlsalinas* and *Beyond the BEATen Path*. He is also an adjunct professor of Communications at St. Edwards University, Austin, Texas. In 2002, raúlsalinas was the recipient of the Louis Reyes Rivera Lifetime Achievement Award presented by La Causa, a student group at Amherst College, Massachusetts, and The Dark Souls Collective. In March 2003, he was honored with the Martin Luther, Jr., César Chavez, Rosa Parks Visiting Professorship Award given by the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. Most recently, he received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Association for Latino Arts Culture (NALAC) in October 2004. And, he has toured with saxophonist Fred Ho and poet Magdalena Gomez in the "Circle Around the Sun Caliente Tour" in March 2005.

Lilia Raquel Rosas

A Chicana feminist, Lilia Raquel Rosas is originally from Albany, California in the San Francisco Bay Area, but has lived in Austin, Texas since 1995. She has volunteered at Red Salmon Arts and Resistencia Bookstore and is currently the University of Texas at

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Daniel Whittle

I'm from Texas but my dad is from Florida and my mom is from Georgia. I'm sort of a shy person until you get to know me better. My goal is to finish school and go to college to study chemistry and become a chemist because I've always wanted to be one since I was two.

Asa Potter

I am fourteen years old and I was born on October 24, 1990. I live with my mom, Kelly, my dad, Jerry, and, my sister, Ashleigh. I have lived in Austin, Texas my whole life and I do not plan to move. I really like to skateboard and hang out with my friends. My mom's family is Irish and English and my dad's family is Indian, English, Irish, and a lot of other ethnicities. When I grow up, I hope to be a pro skater or an engineer.

Gabriela Sanchez

I am from Mexico City and I was born on April 28, 1991. My mom is from Valle del Bravo, my grandparents are from Spain, and my ancestors are too. My dream is to be an abogada because I want to help people that are innocent and want justice. I want to see Los Kumbia Kings because I am obsessed with them.

Susana Sanchez

I was born on November 7, 1990 in Austin, Texas. Mi familia es de Celeya, Guanajato. I am a student at Burnet Middle School. I like to bring happiness and joy to people and I like to get attention. I like to meet and talk to new people. My hobbies are shopping and having fun. My goals are to finish school and to get a good job, and on the side to go out and have fun in my nice truck.

Juan Serrano

I was born in San José, California on June 11, 1991. I went to school at Seven Trees Elementary School. I lived there for four years then I moved to Austin, Texas. Almost all my family is from Mexico and I am proud because they are from there. Right now I go to Burnet Middle School and, next year, I am going to go Lanier High School. My goal is to be Nascar driver.

Preface

If only they
had turned off the television
and tune into their own imaginations

—Pedro Pietri, "Puerto Rican Obituary," 1969

Save Our Youth (SOY), the most treasured literary project of Red Salmon Arts (RSA), has a longstanding history of nurturing, developing, and promoting literature with youth who are "hard to reach" and/or belong to underrepresented communities. Members of the RSA staff and collective have taken these unique writing/healing workshops, that also incorporate music and visual arts, into the Austin and surrounding area's public schools and juvenile justice facilities. Often in conjunction with local and regional arts organizations, this program cultivates and supports organic ways of learning and knowing.

In these times where local, state, and federal governments are slashing arts and cultural programs in our public schools, English teacher Ken Zarifis' invitation to conduct SOY intensive writing clinics with his eighth-grade English class at Burnet Middle School in Austin was especially salient. Internationally renowned poet Raúl Salinas, Founder and Director of Red Salmon Arts, and I co-facilitated several writing clinics with these students from October to December of last year. Inspired by Raúl's holistic teaching method, we collectively brought an energy and spirit that transformed the classroom into a safe space where we could all become writers, poets, and story- and truth- tellers. By asking the students to draw from their own life-stories to write poems or "medicine stories," as Raúl calls them, of liberation, empowerment, and healing these young authors envisioned, created, and presented poetry that reflected their experiences, memories, and histories.

This anthology, *So Look at Me Now*, which borrows its title from a line in the poem, "Leaving the Past Behind," by LaTonya

Bell, represents the focus, vivacity, and creativity of these workshops. Indeed, we used an open dialogue approach, along with an emphasis on cultural awareness and pride, to breakdown the writing process. We shared with students not only the style and mechanics of poetry, but featured free verse, spoken word films, and music to expose them to a broad range of literary forms. In this instance, these emerging poets did heed the late Nuyorican poet Pedro Pietri's advice to "tune into their own imaginations" to write poetry that explores stories of migration, pain, love, growing-up, heroism, homeland, and family to voice those matters that often go unsaid.

We would like to express our sincerest thanks to Ken Zarifis for opening up his classroom and overseeing his students through this project. Muchísimas gracias to cultural worker and RSA Administrator Rene Valdez for arranging the writing clinics and providing invaluable feedback in the editing of the collection; to visual artist/poet/musician ezequiel peña-banegas for assisting with the workshops; to critically-acclaimed muralist Raúl Valdez for the evocative and powerful cover art and graphic design; and to Edgar Acuña whose illustration was the inspiration for the cover. Finally, many thank yous/mil gracias to the young authors of Burnet Middle School for their ganas/enthusiasm and dedication to the creation of this endeavor.

Let's all be truth-tellers!

Lilia Raquel Rosas
 Southside, Austin, Tejas
 Octubre 2004-Junio 2005

Cesar Mejia

I was born on September 5, 1990. I am from McAllen, Texas but my parents are from Honduras. When I was two years old, I came to Austin. The thing that makes me happiest is playing football and soccer and having good friends. Mi meta es ser un policía.

Marcos Mendoza

I was born in Austin, Texas in 1991. My whole family was born in Mexico, except for me. So, I'm the only gringo in my entire family. My hobbies are to hang out the whole day with my friends. I like hip hop and Spanish-language music and lots more. I love pizza and Mexican food. My dream is to become a filmmaker in Hollywood.

Fernando Nava

I am from Mexico City. My dad, Leo, is from Guerrero, Mexico. My mom, Delphina, is from Mexico City. I was born on July 3, 1991 in Mexico City on my mom's birthday. I am proud to be a Mexican not a Mexican't. In 1993, my parents took me to Guerrero, where I learned how much we are a part of nature: the air is puresa, water is paz, and fire is violencia. I might not be so good with girls, but I am good at drawing almost anything. I also like Spanish-language music. I came to the United States on August 6, 2000 and since that day I haven't gone back to Mexico.

David Perry

I am thirteen years old and I was born on January 27, 1991. I'm from Austin, Texas. I am a shy person; I don't like standing in front of people to speak. I love sports; that is playing rather than watching them. My favorite sports are football, basketball, soccer, and baseball. I am half-German and I am very proud of this. My dad and grandparents are from Germany. My parents are divorced now four years, but it doesn't bother me. I have two brothers and one sister who are all older than me.

named Sergio who is eight and my brother was born in Los Angeles like me. My sister Dulce and my parents are from Aguascalientes. I love to sleep—it's my hobby. My dream is to finish school and graduate. I want to be a pediatrician because I like to be around babies.

Ana Gamino

I am from Monterrey, Mexico. I was born on June 19th and I am fourteen years old. My family is from Monterrey and Guanajuato, and I have one brother and two sisters. My favorite sport is soccer and I like to draw. My dream is to become a lawyer.

Nayeli Gonzalez

My birthday is on November 29, 1990. I was born and raised in Austin, Texas. My mom and dad are from Michoacán and they came to Austin to get a better life for my little brother and me. Even though I was born here and rarely even go to Mexico, I'm still proud and thankful for having a bit of Mexican culture in my life. When I grow up my dream is to become a doctor and to some day have my very own Hummer.

Breidy Gutierrez

I am fourteen and was born Isla Veracruz, Mexico in 1989. I am a mix of black, Indian, French, and much more, which makes me proud. My dream in my life now is to be an interior designer, which is my passion. I like getting something new or old, putting it together, creating something new, and making dreams come true. Besides that, I want to become a streetcar racer.

Jonathan Marquez

I was born in Mexico City on October 15, 1989. My father was born in Cuernavaca, Morelia. I like to play soccer. I have a sister and her name is Ana Karen Marquez. She was born on September 20, 1988. Y estoy orgulloso de ser chilango y le voy a las Aguilas de América.

Francisco Agüero

Ella

When was the last time that you saw her de pie.
 Decaída y amargada por la vida.
 You think that you are going to have her pa' toda la extendida
 y poco a poco fue apareciendo la oscuridad.
 Entre the days buenos y malos de ese mes.
 She talked about el pasado de las cosas buenas y malas con las
 que había tratado.

She no longer sees la diferencia entre un día y un mes
 y tiene 7 meses buscando un porque.
 She said mientras el sol se apaga y la luna se enciende
 todo lo que pasa en ese rato se queda en el corazón.
 She talked con toda la certeza y sin hablar de la tristeza.

You

You are so beautiful
 and you're a star
 You have so much ability
 like a star.

Why you are so beautiful
 many say that you're a liar
 but I say that they are stupid
 I say that you are much more than a rose.

You are very special to some one
 tell me who that some one is?

Keaton Alexander

The Great

This person I know
is a very good person,
she never waited on anybody else
to help her when she needed it.

She has taken a special place
in everybody's heart,
and she has most definitely been
around for a long time.

That great person is a
Mother to my grandmother,
A grandmother to my mom,
And a great grandmother to many.

She is a special person to me
because she is my great grandmother.
She passed away on October 16, 2004,
she graduated, got her scholarship to heaven,
and she's not coming back anymore.
But as long as I know she's in a better place,
I will be OK.

Choices

If I can't do what I wanna do,
then my job is not to do
what I don't wanna do
It's not the same thing
but it's the best I can do.
If I can't have what I want
then my job is to want what I've got.
And be satisfied,
then at least there is something less I want.

Contributors

Francisco Agüero

I am thirteen years old. I was born in Teloloapan, Guerrero, on January 24, 1991. My mother is from Mexico and her name is Virginia Salgado. I want to be a doctor because I can help people. I like to play soccer with my uncles. I am proud to be a Mexican because I was born in a beautiful country.

Keaton Alexander

I was born in Austin, Texas on November 28, 1990. My ancestors are Indian, and my grandparents are from Bastrop, Texas. I have two sisters and two brothers. My mother lives in Houston and one brother and one sister live with her. I like to play all sports like football, basketball, running track, and kickball, and dodgeball. My favorite foods are spaghetti, pizza, and meatloaf. I am not a shy person around girls or anybody. I like attention; I like to listen to different types of music. I am nice, very handsome, and very respectful.

La'Tonya Bell

I was born in Tyler, Texas on October 14, 1989. I live with my dad, stepmom, two sisters, and brother. My dad was born in Houston, Texas. I have a twin sister, who I love very much. My goal is to become a gospel singer because I love to sing. Life has been good and I love waking up in the morning and seeing the sunrise because that let's me know that I am alive.

María Castelán (Biography Unavailable)

Erika De Loera

I was born in Los Angeles, California on January 14, 1991. I moved from Los Angeles to Austin for a better life. I have two sisters. One of them is Vanessa, who is one year older than me. The other one, Dulce, is sixteen years old. I also have a brother



La'Tonya Bell

Dear Demon

Partying all night
 didn't come back
 the next night
 dinner wasn't prepared
 ate tuna out of a can
 ran out of food
 Mamma wasn't there to
 help us through
 money came in and out
 we always went without
 we thought she cared
 but what was the use
 she was thinking
 about you
 Dear Demon this poem is
 for you
 for all the problems
 you have caused
 for keeping our mom out
 until the break of dawn
 it wasn't her fault
 you had the control
 Dear Demon
 this poem is for you for all the problems
 you have caused.

Leaving the Past Behind

All the lies
have been said
have been told
but let me stand up
and tell you the truth
about the new and the old.
When I was 6 years old,
you beat me and hurt me
until you felt good
but I guess you didn't care
about my emotions inside
'cause you left big fat bruises on my backside.
And now you come to see me
when I have turned 10 years old, you apologize
and say I will love you until I'm dead and gone
I believed you but you turned around
and did it again.
I have turned 13 now
I'm living with my dad
his wife and his kids
I don't see you around anymore
I guess that means you don't care.
You weren't there
to see me graduate from the 5th grade
You weren't even there
to see me celebrate my 15th birthday.
But I guess you can say
that I'm growing up now
growing up without a mother in my life
so look at me now.

Daniel Whittle

Bullies

No matter how much you call me names
no matter how much you beat me up
no matter how much you destroy my stuff
even though I cry
even though I fall
even though I hurt
though I say, "So what, it doesn't matter"
it really does
you're just trying to make feel sad
you're just trying to make me feel mad
you're just sad
you're just mad
you're just trying to let your emotions out

Juan Serrano

The Mosquito

One way is to fill of blood
and the other way is to sleep in a tree
waiting for a person to come by him
to drink their blood.



Mom I'm making it on my own
'cause I'm tired of looking back
hoping you will come
but I found out that I'm just wasting my time
instead of leaving the past behind.

Alone

I am alone
I have no home
I am brave but
I'm not OK
I'm smart
but I'm no genius
I have no food
but I get what I can
though I am alone
I try my best
to go on
but every time I try
I remember
that I am alone.

María Castelán

Poema sin título

Estos versos son
dedicados solamente
para ti, para la niña
que yo más quiero y
la que tanto me
ha hecho sufrir

Gracias

Gracias por ser buena
gracias por comprenderme
pero sabes aunque te
vayas yo siempre
te tendré en mente.

With all My Heart

I met you some time ago,
ever since then I've loved you,
so you're everything I'll ever need
you made me see things I didn't see.
You make me smile when I have a bad day
you chase all my bad thoughts away
you're the person who has the key to my heart.
I pray each night that we will never be apart
my love for you will always be alive
never will I doubt or will my feelings die.
I promise to always be faithful and true forever
with all my heart...I love you

Susana Sanchez

Proud to be Mexican

México
 mi México
 mi tierra
 mi vida
 mi familia
 todo por méjico
 that's no shame, that's my pride
 to stand up and to say, "Yes, I'm Mexican,"
 even though I live in the U.S.
 even though my family swam through the Rio Grande
 even though they jumped fences to run away from la migra
 they only came here to make a better Life
 to work and find the way
 the way to a better place
 we don't come here to make desmadres
 like some people may think
 we come to the U.S. to get a better life
 not to make it almost impossible to get the same freedom as others
 because of documents that some don't have
 when this used to be our land
 they didn't need documents to come and take it away
 now we need documents
 to come back to what at first belonged to us
 we're worth more
 way more
 so why don't we get treated with the same respect?

Erika De Loera

Stars

Little fire balls
 shining every night
 as brand new bulbs
 millions and millions, can't be counted.

In one, two, or three nights
 only can be seen, touched,
 heard, tasted, or smelled.
 Only if I could reach up
 and grab it as an apple
 being grabbed from an apple tree
 "STARS."

Untitled

For your return,
 I will give anything,
 there's nothing better
 than your kisses
 coming from your lips.
 If I leave this planet,
 you are like a shooting star,
 if I sleep at night,
 you are in my dreams,
 so please come back.

Nayeli Gonzalez

My Best Friend

Today I found a friend
who knew everything I felt.
She knew my every weakness,
and the problems I've been dealt.

She understood my wonders,
and listened to my dreams.
how I felt about life and love,
and knew what it all means.

Not once did she interrupt me,
or tell me I was wrong.
She understood what I was going through,
and promised she'd stay long.

I reached out to this friend.
to show her that I cared.
To pull her close and let her know
how much I need her there.
I went to hold her hand
and to pull her a bit nearer
and realized that this perfect friend I found
was nothing but my mirror.

In Your Heart

No se que pasa y como es posible
que habiendo tantas estrellas y una luna tan bonita
mis ojos solo se iluminen con la sonrisa de tu boca.

Gabriela Sanchez

PeeWee

You are perfect
you are pretty
I love you
cuz you're
PEEWEE
and tell
N.J.N.O.B
that I love him
like you think
be nice and
tell every one
that LOS KUMBIA KINGS,
are #1

Angel

Un ángel sabe cuando
necesitas, que alguien te escuche,
un amigo te escucha sin decirle
que lo necesitas.

El Amor

El amor es el amor,
no tiene comparación
ni definición,
solamente es el amor,
y está en tu corazón.

José Rosas

México

México es la cosa, más perrona
que nosotros los paisanos queremos
México y como México no hay dos
somos muy cabrones que hay aquí y en otros estados.

Mexico

Mexico is everything,
and all that we paisanos love
Mexico! and like Mexico there is no other
we're the baddest there is here and in other states.

No se como explicar lo que siento en mi corazón,
Se desborda, quiero gritar lo que siento,
te amo y hoy todo mi ser se emociona.

This love is the love without comparison, sin definición
it is only love and it is in your heart.

Breidy Gutierrez

2nd Chance

We've been through rough times but we survived them all.

After 1 year, you said you hated me,
 after 1 year, you said you don't love me,
 after 1 year you said "Go back to where you came from, "
 after 1 year, you said that you don't want be with me.

But you and me know that after 1 year you still love me,
 want me, and miss me.
 I'm sorry for the mistake that I made, and with all this I ask,
 "Would you give me a 2nd chance?", because I still love you
 and I know you still love me,
 so what's stopping you if you want to be with me.

You say that you want to hear the 3 words " I LOVE YOU,"
 from a girl that cares for you, trusts you, wants to be with you,
 and guess what? Don't you see it?
 That dream girl is standing right in front of you waiting to tell you
 "I LOVE YOU"

Baby if you give me a 2nd chance,
 you will hear those 3 words that you've been waiting to hear for
 the rest of your life!!

"I LOVE YOU"

Asa Potter

Fallen

You stop and drop
 faster than a heartbeat
 hit the floor, eyes open
 mind closed
 brain off like a light
 at night
 body cold
 soul hot
 lifeless
 breathless
 fallen.

Death

Life lost
 like a flower that loses its petals
 simply taken
 the weeping of the people
 as they mourn the death
 tears drifting down their face
 to symbolize the sadness of death.

My Courageous Grandpa

He was like a walrus
as he jumped into the freezing lake
to save three teenagers
screaming for their lives
my grandpa is so courageous.

He didn't hesitate
he didn't meditate
he did what he had to do
my grandpa is so courageous.

He wasn't concerned about his own life
as he paddled, the story tells
it was a great sacrifice
my grandpa is so courageous.

He went for the third girl,
though he couldn't save her life
and get her out of the water
and saving two girls
is what made my grandpa so courageous.

In the Memory of Gabriel Martinez

Drugs get to you when you least expect it.
Next thing you know
you are smoking weed, you are inhaling crack, taking pills,
they get to you when you least expect, and you can't do anything about it,
until its hurting you, you get addicted,
next thing you know you are doing drugs everyday...non-stop.

Good bye, will miss you,
you didn't stop and I didn't do anything to stop you.
Now I live with that regret for the rest of my life.
I'm in pain, blaming myself for your death,
It's my fault that you are 10 ft. under,
it's my fault that we all got our family in pain, in depression, in worries,
but above all this "I can't believe you're gone."

You were the best bro that I always dreamed, hoped, and wished for
and now that I have you, I lose you, at the age of 18.
You always made right choices, made good decisions,
you would tell me what's right, because I made bad choices,
and I still do.
Who is going to tell me what's right?,
but you were there for me, no matter what,
and I know you still are,
now that I made a bad choice by not helping you.
I am never going to forgive myself for that.
"NEVER."

Now we all say "rest in peace,"
and may God Bless you, and may God be with us all.

Luv you Gabriel
A~K~A
Shark ☺

Jonathan Marquez

You and Me

Again only you and me
 one river and one music.
 I miss listening to your voice
 one star from the eclipse
 the moment I touch your skin.
 You were in my arms yesterday
 there is something I wanted to tell you
 please come close.
 When I wake up
 I feel the heat of your body
 next to mine.
 She never thinks that one day
 she will find only you and me in the bed.
 Side by side only you and me know
 I can tell you that I love you
 Once again
 only you and me.

David Perry

Me

I am bright and very outgoing
 although my face is not always glowing
 I love playing sports
 but I hate doing chores.
 I have a lot of friends
 that stick with me
 thick or thin
 they always pull through
 by turning my frown around.
 I'm very tall for my age
 I try to keep control
 from releasing my rage.
 I am thirteen years old
 but growing older.
 I have two brothers
 and one sister
 who are always breathing down my shoulder.
 My mom and dad are divorced now.
 They divorced four years ago
 but I'm not sad though
 because my dad wasn't never home.
 He was always at work
 trying to make pay.
 That's most of me
 the rest is too personal.
 That's all I got to say
 maybe I'll tell you the rest
 some other day.

Fernando Nava

My Father

My father is like the star in the north
 guiding me through the night
 he tells me what to do
 when something is not right.

Today I almost got into a fight
 but I remembered what he had said last night.
 Sometimes you don't know what to do
 which way to choose.

My father is like the star in the north
 guiding me through the night.

Tú

Tus ojos azules como el cielo
 tus manos suaves como un pétalo
 tus labios rojos como una rosa
 pero lo que mas me gusta
 es el sabor de tu boca.

Cesar Mejia

My Parents

My mother is a rose
 and my father es un clavel
 and I'm a little botón que acabo de nacer
 when I was a little baby
 they held me in their arms
 now that I am older
 they hit me everywhere.

Untitled

I like pepsi
 and I like coca
 but I like even better
 the kisses from your boca.

Marcos Mendoza

I Love You

Day and night struggling to sleep
 `cause inside My Heart an empty space lies.
 I will always remember
 the day we met at the park
 that I fell in love
 I was so interested in meeting you.
 But now I'm hoping that you still love me?
 Night after night tears run down my cheeks
 as I'm lying in my bed calling and calling you to see if you're
 there
 but no response.
 I want to tell you my 8 letters:
 "I LOVE YOU."

Red, Blue

Red, Blue
 you see it in the streets
 northside
 southside
 westside
 eastside
 gunshots in the night
 "pow," "pow," "POW!"
 Sirens from a block away
 "wooo," "wooo," "wooo."
 Everybody running as la jura
 chases the Red and Blue into
 the black night.
 Driving in their Impalas
 trying to lose the heat

as the Crips fall into
 a dead end.
 Nowhere to go.
 Busted.
 Damn!