

Que Florezca la Luz, San Antonio

(after a ceremonial song discovered in the dark)

The light bloomed for three hundred years.
Que florezca la luz por trescientos años más.

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Look east,

Feel the pride of generations, historic homes and hallowed 'hoods, families and friends, culture and church, soul and song.
The east is overflowing with history: St. Paul Square, Mount Zion First Baptist, a cluster of cemeteries. Composed of close-knit community who keep the dreams alive despite the setbacks and in the face of so much redevelopment. From the Hays St. Bridge, the east sees everything: city lights, starlight, fireworks, the flash of a lighter on a blue ink night.

A pecan tree beside a beauty shop.
A turtle wandering homewards towards the river.
A cardinal singing a spiritual at dusk.

May the light bloom,
The sun rises first on the people of the east.

Turn north,

From Crossroads to Ingram, from North Star to La Cantera, the north is a mecca of malls, as well as jobs, the Medical Center and USAA, Fiesta Texas and Sea World. UTSA, a campus carved out of limestone. Subdivisions and more subdivisions, vivisected by freeways, suburbia intermingled with ranchland. The north is about new beginnings, for the families who left the inner city not that long ago, to the recent arrivals from all parts of the planet who come to San Antonio for the very same reasons everyone comes here: to work hard and raise children and find a home in a city built atop bones.

A patch of bluebonnets on the side of a congested freeway.
A white-tailed deer following a path behind an apartment complex.
A red-tailed hawk flying, stealthily, overhead.

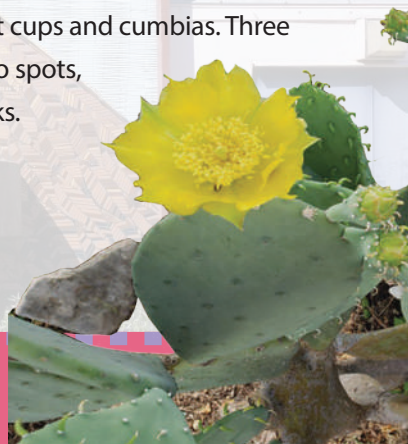
May the light bloom in the north,
Polaris flickers faithfully through a canopy of oak trees.

Look south,

It's the closest we can get to the border, nearest to Mexico, four Spanish missions testify to the timeline this Tricentennial celebrates. U.S. Air Force bases and facilities, mini military cities within the city. Southside community is puro corazón, alive with pulgas that buzz with ancient hustle, it bustles with fruterias that fizzle the sweet heat of fruit cups and cumbias. Three words: Southwest Military Drive. The major artery of commerce and cruising, pawn shops and taco spots, legends and chisme. Que más quieres, there are even healing hot wells and haunted railroad tracks.

A mesquite tree bursting with pods despite the drought.
A goat romping in a rowdy vecino's backyard.
Chicharras composing entire symphonies at twilight.

EDITOR'S NOTE: In observance of Hispanic Heritage Month, we offer our readers this special poem by Bonnie Cisneros dedicated to the city of San Antonio, the largest Hispanic-majority city in the U.S., with 807,000 Hispanics making up 61.2% of its population. Our cultural and historical heritage is one we celebrate daily.



Que florezca la luz,
Full moon beaming, the radio on, and the windows down as we drive south.

Now turn west,
Go down Commerce, Zarzamora, Guadalupe, to the botanica, the panaderia, the taqueria, the cantina.
Cruise all the way down, armed with flowers for familia out at the chain of San Fernando cemeteries. See the
dried up creeks, spy spray painted concrete. The west is rich with shrines to Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Little Flower,
ripe with the history of los Courts, and blessed with a constellation of Chicanx cultural arts centers. Peep the glorious murals
that illustrate the beauty of the west as precisely as a tattooed teardrop.

The ancient aloe vera, planted by an abuela, behind a chain link fence.
A pack of scrappy dogs running up, then down the street.
The rooster crowing boldly in the shade of a pomegranate tree.

Que florezca la luz,
Praise the pinks, the purples, the golden light of the sun as it rests in the west.

Finally, turn now towards center.
Downtown, el centro, where all the sides convene, legends and landmarks, tourists and transportation, arenas and every
single side that composes the story of the Alamo. Pásale, amiga, let's admire the landscape of the Riverwalk and its
reaches, let's walk the luminous Hemisfair grounds, maybe travel up the Tower of the Americas, a structure that rises like an
exclamation point on the city's modern chapter.

The sway of cypress trees, centuries old, from their nooks along the riverbank.
The slow clop of horses, in ribbons and blinders, pulling glowing Cinderella carriages.
A colony of bats under the freeway, flying out like clockwork into the electric night.

May the light bloom, San Antonio.
Que florezca la luz, San Anto.

We see ceremonial firelight,
we hear ancestral voices echoing back
ten, eleven, twelve thousand years,
all leading now,
all leading here,
to this mosaic of light once called Yanaguana,
now named San Antonio,

a story as amazing as a falling star over Houston Street.

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— Bonnie Ilza Cisneros

BIO: Bonnie Ilza Cisneros, a 4th-generation educator in a line of S. Texas schoolteachers, is a mother of two who earned an MFA in Creative Writing from Texas State University. A member of the Macondo Writers Workshop, Bonnie moonlights as DJ Despeinada consciously spinning vinyl records that center women artists of color and musicians of the borderlands.
www.bonniecisneros.com/dj-despeinada