



George Floyd mural in downtown Brownsville, TX by Marcos Castro.



Pandemic Solstice

And so we will call this home
 our heaven, our heaving,
 our harm, and our justicia.
 And yet we live, knowing
 over 500,000+ in this country alone
 dead and the George Floyd
 mural in Brownsville
 vandalized again,
 knowing somewhere
 someone is slurring
 the n word and saying go back
 to where you came from
 as they believe their families
 sprouted here like corn
 ever since the very seeds
 first grew on these plots of earth
 they claim money and banks own.
 I could write a polite sonnet,
 sound my words, count syllables,
 or I could choose to sing

someone else's love song instead.
 I could
 paint my paint over the murals
 of my papers like a palimpsest,
 I could paint my pant, coat my
 tongue
 with berries and fermented varieties
 and see what messes I can create.
 Poems can't change systems
 and yet here I am refusing
 to believe they can't charge
 the synapses in my brain
 with even some kind of minimal
 protest to falling asleep
 because dreams cannot
 be recorded and sometimes the sun
 shines longer than the moon.
 This is a prelude to a protest,
 a prelude to mourning
 the voices, the appetites,

In My Dreams I Almost Learn How to Cook

My child woke me mid-dream
 And I rarely dream
 My late grandmother was about to
 teach me
 How to make arroz
 Con gandules
 I was about to taste it warm from the
 rectangle
 Aluminum foil pan
 Except I was awakened and my abuela
 Never made arroz con gandules
 That was my ex-cuñada's Boricua
 Mother standing in for my abuela
 from Chihuahua

I miss all of the women who knew
 How to make the arroz just
 right
 And, that my abuela learned
 from amigas,
 Gives me hope
 (As do YouTube videos)
 But I imagine both abuelas would say
 with certainty
 This is how you make things right
 And also imply without judgement
 Making things right on your own
 terms
 Will help you live a happy life

– Emmy Pérez

the people surviving COVID-19
 but killed by others' hands
 with guns and knees with
 kneelings-on
 and chokeholds with their laws
 and procedures that sanction.
 We'll never cease our local and
 global
 protests because we were born
 too soon in history's timeline,
 which means I have hope
 for the future if we can
 also nurture the earth
 while we are at it,
 and I truly ask if that time
 will ever come,
 will that time ever come,
 when will that time arrive
 for everyone?

– Emmy Pérez

NOTE: Pandemic Solstice was first published in The Langdon Review of the Arts in Texas in 2020. I keep updating the number of COVID deaths since.



BIO

Emmy Pérez, Texas Poet Laureate 2020 and co-founder of Poets Against Walls, is the author of *With the River on Our Face* and *Solstice*.

She is a professor of creative writing at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and also serves as associate director of the Center for Mexican American Studies. Currently, she is the 2021 Consulting Artist-in-Residence for the Just Futures project with UTSA in collaboration with the Esperanza Peace & Justice Center.