

Tocayos -for Jovita Idar (1885-1946)



You could not have saved those tocamyos,
Jovita, who were lynched in two Texas towns
a few months apart in 1910-11. You could not
have nursed those jóvenes back to health:
Antonio Rodríguez, 20
Antonio Gómez, 14

A few months and wide counties apart,
the Antonios were lynched like blood brothers:
one hanged from a ladder laden with angels,
the other burned like a brand in the darkness.
You could not have saved them, friend.
A lynching posse does not wait.

Instead the Idars called *El Primer Congreso
Mexicanista*. I know how some narrate
this story. Their facts are not wrong.
You cared about jobs, schools, elections.
But lynchings were paramount.

Here in the twenty-first century, Jovita,
under your otherworldly Masonic eye,
I know I must act. As if checking
my star chart or the forecast for rain,
I study daily an online table
of scheduled Texas executions.

For weeks, only two names have appeared:
Ramiro Gonzáles, received age 23
Rubén Gutiérrez, received age 21
R. G.
R. G.

These men, too, are tocamyos.
No. 1 and No. 2 are scheduled to die
in consecutive J months,
June and July.

The state has miscalculated,
has misread the stars--thus awakening
tocamyos with names like Antonio
who want only to find those lost.
Beware, Texas, what you dare
under Jovita's watchful, mystical eye.

—Rachel Jennings

One Day/Three Young Men

I am regularly filled with rage. I burst out crying inexplicably.
My joints ache, my heart (surprisingly strong), pounds. I think all
the time of my mom, who suffered the Long Goodbye, and I miss
her, but I'm comforted by her life, her strength, wit and uncondi-
tional love for us.

When on social media, I see a woman on the Darién Gap,
frightened, no terrified, holding ever so tightly to the child in
her arms, I tell myself, don't scroll, you're supposed to look,
you have to look, you're supposed to share. Did they fall, I
wonder, did they make it over the concertina? One *compañero*
who did, tells us: he saw someone fall, down the cliff, joining
others. He relives it every night.

Our collective pain flourishes.

But one recent day, on the way to the doctor, I stop for coffee
(NOT Starbucks). The insurance company calls and I stress.
The barista asks, *How's your day going? I'm having a hard
time*, I say, almost crying. Again. *I'm sorry*, he says. *Your
coffee's on me*.

An hour later, my audiologist, not even 30, says "*I'm right there
with you*" when I tell him, *No, Medicare doesn't pay for my
hearing aids. That money is being sent to Israel to kill babies in
Gaza. "I'm right there with you,"* he says ever so gently.

Later that same afternoon, I head to physical therapy, limping.
Toda chueca, crooked AF and I feel so, so old. *How's your
day*, the young man asks, before starting with the pulling and
stretching. *I'm having a hard time*, I blurt out inappropriately. I
am so taken aback when he asks me then: "*Do you want to talk
about it?*"

OMG, do I want to talk about it?? About Gaza, the border, Trump,
high rent, climate change, do I want to talk about it?? I want to
scream about it! What a question, what concern, what a heart, I
think. I want to say to him "*Your momma must be wonderful.*"

But all I say is, *that's very kind*, it's just a perfect storm of *Mal Ojo*
for me right now. I don't say capitalism has laid one fucking
Mal Ojo on us all. He knows.

On that one day, these three young men gave me hope. Gave me
joy. A smile at the end of the day. Because one young man was
right there with me, another gave me free coffee, and another
wanted to talk, to be a person, a real person even though I'd
known him four whole minutes.

They gave me hope. They gave me joy. Gaza, we're right there
with you.

—Teresa Gutiérrez



Migrants wade with their possessions and help small children across one of the rivers in the Darién Gap. Image: Nadja Drost