

# Dialogue Between Don Chon and Geneva : “La Máscara y la Migra”

*(A conversation on ICE, identity, and self-betrayal in the barrio)*

**Setting:** Don Chon Buendia is an older man living on The Eastside of San Antonio, where Black and Brown families reside. He’s a retired carpenter who was involved in some of the Chicano movement activism 50 years ago. He has also participated in *Black Lives Matter* events. One of his old-time friends is Geneva Williams, an African American woman who is close in age to Chon and has had a similar history of seeking justice for her community.

*Late afternoon on The Eastside of San Antonio. Don Chon is sitting on an old folding chair under the shade of a mesquite tree. Geneva walks up with a plastic grocery bag and two cold sodas. The sun’s still hot, but the wind is finally picking up. The plática begins:*

**Geneva:**

Mira, Don Chon, I brought you a soda. I know you don’t like the diet kind.

**Don Chon:**

Gracias, m’ija. My blood sugar’s probably high, but what the hell. If I die, I die sweet.

**Geneva (chuckles):**

Don’t say that. We still need you to set folks straight. Especially now—with all this *ICE* business tearing up families again.

**Don Chon:**

Ay, sí. I saw that video yesterday. One of them agents—dark like us—pulling that señora outta her car. She was crying, holding her baby, and he didn’t even blink. Like he was made of stone.

**Geneva:**

That’s what’s messin’ me up, Don. How can someone who looks like us do that? How can they treat raza like trash?

**Don Chon:**

‘Cause they forgot who they are, Geneva. Somewhere along the way, they started thinkin’ that wearing a badge makes ’em better than the rest of us. Makes ’em think they belong to the side that’s always been stepping on our necks.

**Geneva:**

Yeah, like they changed sides or something. But I don’t think

it’s just that. I think some of them really believe they’re doing “what’s right.” That they’re “protecting the country.”

**Don Chon:**

Protecting what? You ever notice how they only go after poor folks? People just trying to make a living? Ain’t no rich folks getting raided. Ain’t no Canadians getting yanked out of factories.

**Geneva:**

Facts. But you know what really breaks my heart? Some of those *ICE* agents are Chicanos, gente from the Valley or here from the Westside. Maybe they had uncles who picked crops or abuelos who crossed without papers. And now they’re knocking down doors and taking people away in front of their kids.

**Don Chon:**

It’s like they’re wearing a mask. Not a Halloween one—a mask that hides where they come from. Makes ’em forget abuelita’s tortillas, mamá’s Spanglish, or how we used to be afraid of la migra ourselves.

**Geneva:**

And now *they are* la migra. That’s what hurts. Like... how does someone go from being the chased to being the chaser?

**Don Chon:**

I’ll tell you how. It’s what this country’s been doing to brown and Black folks for generations. Telling us we’re less. Making us feel ashamed of our language, our color, our stories. So some of us try to “prove” we’re good Americans. And the fastest way to do that? Step on the ones still at the bottom.

**Geneva:**

Damn. That’s deep, Don. So it’s like... the system messes you up, and then uses you to mess up your own people?

**Don Chon:**

Exactly, *mija*. They turn us into tools. And if we ain't careful, we end up using their hammer to build our own cage.

**Geneva (quietly):**

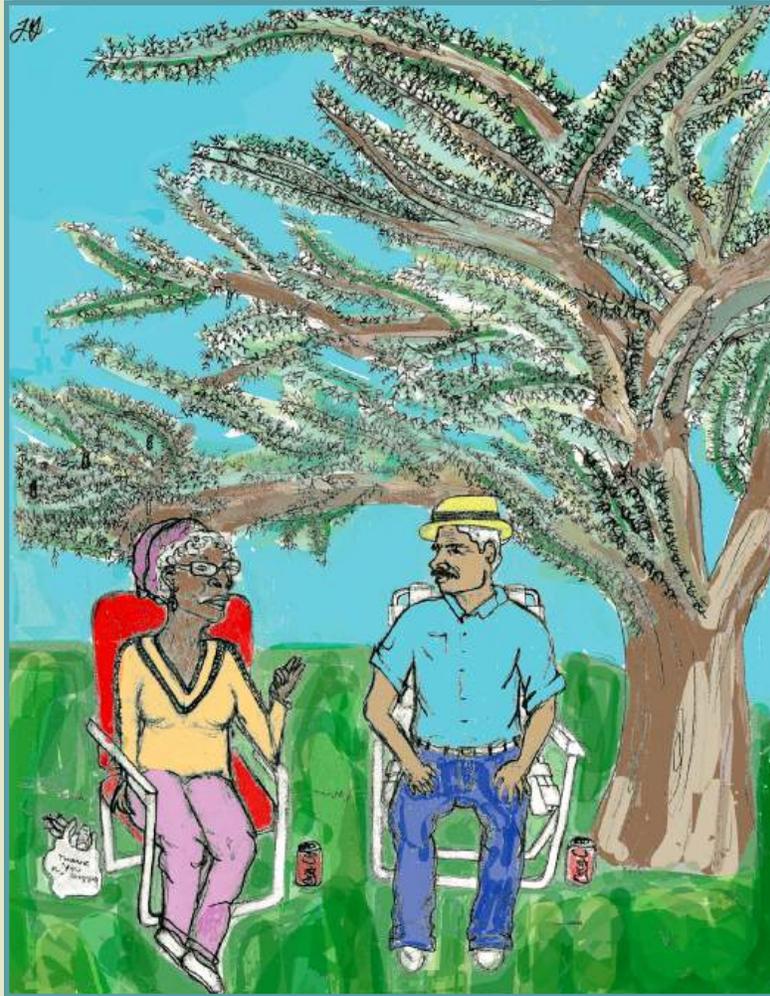
I've seen it. Even some of our own people start saying things like, "They should've come legally," or "They're taking our jobs," like they forgot our history. Like they forgot the Braceros, the fields, the barrios, all of it.

**Don Chon:**

It's fear, too. Some folks think that if they act more American than the Americans, maybe they'll be safe. Maybe they won't be next.

**Geneva:**

But that safety's a lie, right?



Don Chon Buendía chats with his friend, Geneva, as they cool down under the shade of a mesquite tree. Drawing by Jocelina Guerrero.

**Don Chon:**

Claro. They'll always find a reason to remind you you're not one of them. Your skin, your name, your mama's accent—sooner or later, they'll come for you, too.

**Geneva:**

So what do we do, Don? How do we stop this?

**Don Chon:**

We gotta take off the mask. We gotta remind each other that we come from strong people—people who crossed rivers, climbed fences, worked two jobs, and still had time to love us. We gotta be proud of where we come from, not ashamed.

**Geneva:**

And we gotta speak up. Even when it's uncomfortable.

Even if our own cousin works for ICE.

**Don Chon:**

Especially then. And we gotta show the young ones that dignity don't come from a uniform. It comes from standing with your people, not against them.

**Geneva:**

You're right. This ain't just about immigration. It's about how we see ourselves.

**Don Chon (nodding):**

That's it, *mija*. Colonization ain't just soldiers and guns—it's in the mind. They get you to believe their lies, and you end up policing your own.

**Geneva:**

But if they taught us to hate ourselves, we can unlearn it, right?

**Don Chon:**

Damn right. We start by telling the truth. Even when it hurts.

**Geneva (smiles):**

Then let's do it. One truth at a time.

**[Fade out as they sip their sodas and the sky turns a deep orange. Somewhere, a lowrider radio plays a slow ranchera. Don Chon leans back, eyes on the sky.]**

**Don Chon (softly):**

You don't gotta wear a badge to be brave. You just gotta remember who you are.

—Monte Viejito

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