

## Personal Thoughts on Raza and Immigration

A daughter's heartfelt response to the current immigration legislation and events that have transpired written to her father on his birthday:

*Mi Familia,*

*I wrote this early Wednesday morning. The events of the last two weeks have really affected me. I want to share this with you. I love you.*

*Dad, Feliz Cumpleaños.*

*Te quiero much,*

*Julia*

I am awake. Thinking about the history that is being made and remade over the last two weeks.

We have awoke from a long slumber to the realization that we have both power and responsibility to see that our community is not criminalized.

I feel unsettled, partly because I want to be amid the protests in Chicago, Phoenix, Los Angeles. Experience La Raza in a participatory sense of the days of the Movement. Making change, fighting for justice. I know in a small way I am doing my part. Yet, I know I could be doing more.

I feel history running through me. My father's stories of his participation in the Chicano Movement run through me adding to the restlessness, to the excitement, to anger. Since I was small, I've been a part of that history, even tangentially. I was raised to be proud of my mestizaje identity. Raised to point out injustice. The restlessness to express this upbringing in a more explicit way calls to me.

I feel history running through me. My grandfather's crossing to work in the U.S. Was he documented? I am not sure. Did he find work? Yes. Did he become a citizen? Eventually.

Did he fight for his adopted country, Yes -  
drafted into WWII and left his only child - my  
father to his relatives in Mexico until his  
return.

I feel history running through me. As a young  
child, La Migra in their green cars chasing my  
father- a 6th grader through the hills of San  
Ysidro, CA. Was he undocumented? No. A US  
citizen being chased by INS because of the color  
of his skin and his Spanish surname. Too young  
to "prove" his citizenship and threatened to be  
removed from his family and community by arms of  
the government - the men in green. That anger  
of a childhood marked by confusion and fear fed  
my father's resistance to the System and the  
ritual protest of the Mexican border crossing  
that continues to this day.

I feel history running through me as the  
pronunciation of my name sparks comments of  
distance - "Where are you from? Seattle. No, I  
mean Where are you from?" I am an immigrant  
(undocumented) regardless of my birthright.  
These attempts to criminalize immigrants  
criminalize me.

I feel history running through me as I fight to  
gain more information about these insidious laws  
debated in our government. Cloaked Laws that  
institutionalize forms of oppression and  
legalize common sentiments about those "others."  
Those others that build this country, care for  
its children and elderly, harvest its fruit,  
fight its wars, and clean its waste. And those  
"other peoples children" who face an onslaught  
of daily micro aggressions on their culture,  
language, and basic human rights (education,  
health care, and housing). Many survive these  
attacks through the love of their familia and  
their community and yes through a commitment to  
education. Many do not. Rather than find ways  
to build on the rich community knowledge that  
resides in its midst, these new approaches  
threaten to fill our prisons with even more Raza  
- Incarceration rather than education. Their

backwards thinking will only lead to destruction  
and unraveling of humanity.

I feel history running through me. Fueling this  
fire to fight against these injustices. To  
learn from my elders who paved the way of  
protest. To fight for the future of our  
children. To speak out. To cry out. To be angry  
and to demand change. Estoy lista. ¡Raza Si!

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*\*Julia is the daughter of Ricardo Aguirre, an El Centro de la Raza board member.  
**Thank you for sharing these beautiful thoughts with us.***