

not pay minimum wage it does not cover those benefits. If we are lucky our non-farm work will have these benefits. Schools and hospitals are key in rural Canada just so that farmers have access to non-farm work with benefits.

As Canada continues to lose farms, I will lose neighbours and, therefore, my community and access to my non-farm work. I will have to travel farther for basic services, which will increase my workload. It's a never-ending downward spiral.

It's on days like this, that I'm going to bed at 1:00 am and getting up at 6:00am the next day, that I ask myself, "Why am I still fighting to farm?" Then I remind myself that it's the sweetest job in the world. Who else gets to eat fresh honey right off the hive, work outside and inside, make things with sheet metal and wood, be a designer, a gardener, a mechanic, an accountant, a janitor, a personnel manager, and anything else that may be required? I just wish I could get more sleep.

Karen Pedersen is a fifth generation beekeeper farming with her extended family near Cut Knife, Saskatchewan. She is currently the Women's President of the National Farmers Union

¹The total hours at work included time spent on education. The extra time spent on education by the participants reflected the bus time that farm children endure every day to attend school.

References

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VERÓNICA REYES

Sliced Images: the red and brown frontera

Yesterday I flew in from the Southwest
landed in Buffalo airport via Niagara Falls
Traveled down streets layered in hojas
bleeding menstrual sun on the sidewalks
witnessed every summer evening in the desert

Funny, how Tuesday morning I was in El Paso
tip of the west Texas leaning against Nuevo México,
a dry land that doesn't want mexicanos around.
Today in the evening I stand at the northern edge,
A slice of tierra below the great lake.
I am the four corners swaddled in a red rebozo

Hoy, the Texas heat swims in my veins,
but the New York cold blisters my face
The El Paso sun toasts my brown skin
and the Buffalo thin air numbs my ears
In a coffeehouse heaviness swallows me
I sit there eating, drinking, and etching
each detail of this foreign land into my mind
and I am a poet savoring the world around me
*Outside on the lit corner a poem stands alone
Shivering, hovering beneath the brea sky*

On Chippewa street and Delaware Avenue
The names of city streets mask the First Nations
the way Concordia cemetery marks its grave
sites for native people who have walked this land
near the Canadian bank and the Mexican border
and streets of El Paso bleed invaders' names
San Antonio and Santa Fe burn under el sol

*And the poem stares me in the eye, pleading
Where are my people? And the land?*

All nations have been placed on square plots
The Tigua and Ojibwe live on reserved acres
Their sacred lands, their home buried beneath
concrete, buildings and marred with streets

The poem whispers to the black sky

In his story the pale bearded man tied
hundreds of men, women, and children
in a sacrifice with a wave of an ivory hand
in two directions—South and East—over
the river's water that streamed down
the bronzed back of the mountain turtle.
Men in dark robes poured the clear water
on the people—the shade of deep red
brown touched by the sky's hot breath.

*The poem shakes her head, glances down
Black eyes penetrate the layers of time
She turns around and words spill out*

They cracked the turtle's back and killed
the jaguar. Hung its shell and skin on a tree
to dry and threw the meat to the ground to rot.

And the holy bible burned a wooden crucifix
on the back of Tonantzín leaving thick slashes.
She screamed from the depths of her thick
woods.

In the wind, her spirit trails the body of rivers
and the bearded man sliced the skin cutting
bone.

His eyes swallowed the land in a gush of red.

Cortés believed he "conquered" the Aztecs
on the land of cactus where la águila waited
grasping a rattlesnake in its beak and claw.

I sit in this coffeehouse wondering
'Am I not the branch of the mexicana tree?'

*She rubs her arms to keep warm
exhales a frost-breath from her lips*

Treaties scrawled on tree bark paper
signed in feather ink by the white man
and when Niagara Falls onto the rocks—
the air evaporates into a raindrop mist

black words splatter below into a roar
and they drowned in the rapid water,
only to wander for nine-hundred miles
and five hundred years with no *home*.

In the southern red corner lining the Río Bravo
the Mexican Kickapoo crossed the heavy river
The way two-spirited people walk two roads
leaving the gringo borders on the blue map.
They traveled over the long river into Texas
left their marks on fair-skinned bodies
and flew back home to the desert montañas
surviving under the sun amongst the cacti.

*Outside in the Buffalo wind the spirit poem
leaves a gift—the red shawl—on the corner
The poem, nods her head, and smiles
wraps the rebozo tightly around herself*

Their names live on in streets signs, cities
burial sites for the native blood spewed
in the blue north and in the red south
along the calles of El Paso and Buffalo.

I sit in the warm coffeehouse listening
to a jazz vocalist singing a sweet melody
lingering in the air like sweet grass
I stare out the window seeing the corner
darken into a winter's evening in Buffalo.

Tomorrow, Sunday afternoon, I will fly back
to the land of the Tarahumara and Mexican.
Return to see the turquoise sky bleeding a red
sunset from between a brown woman's thighs.
She crosses desert montañas y la frontera
every day
to go
back home.

Verónica Reyes is a Chicana jota from East Los Angeles, California, who is living in Canada as an educator and writer.