



# To live in the Borderlands means you

by Gloria Anzaldúa\*

are neither *hispana india negra española*  
*ni gabacha, eres mestiza, mulata*, half-breed  
caught in the crossfire between camps  
while carrying all five races on your back  
not knowing which side to turn to, run from;

To live in the Borderlands means knowing  
that the *india* in you, betrayed for 500 years,

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Drawing by Héctor Ponce de León.

is no longer speaking to you,  
that *mexicanas* call you *rajetas*,  
that denying the Anglo inside you  
is as bad as having denied the Indian or Black;

*Cuando vives en la frontera*

people walk through you, the wind steals your voice,  
you're a *burra*, *buey*, scapegoat,  
forerunner of a new race,  
half and half —both woman and man, neither—  
a new gender;

To live in the Borderlands means to

put *chile* in the borscht,  
eat whole wheat *tortillas*,  
speak Tex-Mex with a Brooklyn accent;  
be stopped by *la migra* at the border checkpoints;

Living in the Borderlands means you fight hard to

resist the gold elixir beckoning from the bottle,  
the pull of the gun barrel,  
the rope crushing the hollow of your throat;

In the Borderlands

you are the battleground  
where the enemies are kin to each other;  
you are at home, a stranger,  
the border disputes have been settled  
the volley of shots have shattered the truce  
you are wounded, lost in action  
dead, fighting back;



To live in the Borderlands means

the mill with the razor white teeth wants to shred off  
your olive-red skin, crush out the kernel, your heart  
pound you pinch you roll you out  
smelling like white bread but dead;

To survive the Borderlands

you must live *sin fronteras*  
be a crossroads.

*gabacha*: a Chicano term for a white woman  
*rajetas*: literally "split," that is, having betrayed your word  
*burra*: donkey  
*buey*: ox  
*sin fronteras*: without borders