Aguacero Inside “Agua Que Va Caer”

for Amina Baraka,

and for the living memory of the Young Lords

“Malo tiempo, yo no quiero
que me traigan desarreglo,
en mi soledad, Angel Divino,
yo no quiero en mi camino la fatalidad…”

Growin’ up Puertorriqueña/Latina
White/African/Brown
In South Bronx, Loisaida,
El Barrio parts of town

Growin’ up called
Some slavemaster’s name
Other people’s typecast
Strange nicknames

Spic, cuchi-cuchi,
I-no-speekie-een-gle
Pointy-toe-garlic-eatin’
Banana-boat adjectives

Growin’ up with labels
Outta someone else’s mouth
Not me, not mine
Not definitions of myself

“Cuando veo el cielo
Que se ta nublando
Cuando veo el cielo
Que se ta nublando
Agua que va caer…”

Growin’ up shoppin’ bargains
That cost you more and more
Things that fall apart
Before you get them out the store

Growin’ up eatin’ mayonnaise sandwiches
Three times a day
Prayin’ for the hunger
To please go away

(stanza break)
Cookin’ rice and beans ta make that dollar stretch
Fried eggs over white bread
Over white ideals doin’ full-time factory sweat

Growin’ up workin’ piece work in Titi Julia’s kitchen
Gluing rhinestones onto jewelry
At twenty-five cents a piece
A good day’s work about three-fifty each

Early mornin’ breakfast breakin’ pan
With café con leche
Yearnin’ for returnin’ home
To rainforest island paradise

It was a family affair that kept us together
Moliendo masa in between stories
Lookin’ out for one another

Growin’ up grinding plátanos into juicy pastele dreams
On holidays in between the rice and beans

“Te juro te va mojar
Agua que va caer
Te juro que va caer
Agua que va caer…”

Growin’ up with Aye Mamacita
Gimme some today!
Aye Mamita, let me see you walk away!

Growin’ up like good little girls should
Growin’ up always being misunderstood
Got ta, be hot
Got ta be salsa-steppin’-mambo-spit-lickin’-hot

Let’s play today
Growin’ up, instead—get raped today
Growin’ up with sistas all around
Gettin’ raped by the men they love
Sistas growin’ up and gettin’ raped
By people they loved
Not cause they deserved it
Not cause they wanted it or earned it
Just gettin’ raped
The way our mamas got raped
The way our ancestors got raped
The way our island gets raped
By them big hard right political ideals
By conquerors who know how to steal
Our heritage, our pride, our dignity inside

“Te juro que va caer
Agua que va caer
Te digo Chicki que va caer
Agua que va caer...”

Studyin’ hiss-stories of some other place
Conflictin’ lyfestyles of an alien race
Not knowin’ our original Borinquen names
Our common ancestors
African, Arawak and Quisqueya source
Salutin’ someone else’s flag
Prayin’ in someone else’s church

“Te juro que va llover
Agua que va caer...”

Encouraged to look like a color not your own
Speakin’ a language foreign to your soul
Growin’ up learning lessons ‘bout Pocahontas,
John Smith, George Washington, Abe Lincoln
And not knowin’ ‘bout Don Pedro Albizu Campos
Arturo Schomburg or Lolita Lebrón

Holdin’ on to memories of friends
Who fought some other man’s war in Vietnam
Returned as junkies with limbs missing
Or pieces in body bags

Growin’ up singin’ Oh-say-can-you-see
And never seeing the lie beyond US-of-A schemes
That turns us into slaves
Of ignorance and dis-ease
Growin’ up not knowin’—not growin’
Believin’ that we’re free

“Caballero ya tu lo ve
Agua que va caer
Yemayá yo no se por que
Agua que va caer
Caballero que rico
Que rico cha-cha-cha...”
Growin’ up dancin’ bombas and plenas
And didn’t know the names of
Comparsas and merengues
And couldn’t claim the source of

Growin’ up repeatin’ words by
Beachboys, Monkeys and Yaba-Daba-Doo
Not hearin’ Mongo Santamaría
Patato Valdez or Cortijo

Graciela and Celia Cruz singin’
Prayers from their lips
While the Beatles claimed the charts
And Elvis was swingin’ his hips

Growin’ up with Jimmy Hendrix explodin’
Santana cryin’ thru his axe
James Brown shoutin’ loud
It’s time to learn to be Black and Proud

“Si yo me muero, mira Papá, tápate con un papel
Agua que va caer
Yemayá, ma yo ya tú lo ve
Agua que va caer
Yemayá aye yo no se porque
Agua que va caer…”

Growin’ up confused about our identity
Are we black or white?
Are we good or bad?
Why so often sad?
Hardly ever glad
Wonderin’ what is the key
To promote unity in the community

Growin’ up watchin’ Young Lords
Pickin’ up the gun
Marchin’ thru the neighborhood
And feedin’ all the young

Teachin’ all the people
The truth that leads p’alante
Don’t be ashamed
To love your beauty
With orgullo
DESPIERTA BORICUA,  
DEFIENDE LO TUYO!

Growin’ up discoverin’ to stand up for our rights 
Fallin’ down–risin’ up again 
Without givin’ up the fight 
Breakin’ down the obstacles 
That block us on our path 
Luchando through each moment 
Tryin’ to hold us back 

Growin’ up holdin’ on 
To our past and communal culture 
Source of our pride lighting fires in our minds 
Respectin’ one another, praying to our saints 
With reverence to our ancestors 

Growin’ up refusin’ to live a lie 
Takin’ the time, workin’ to define 
Makin’ the space, claimin’ our place 
Strugglin’ to hold onto our peace within 
Holding onto our peace within 
Hold onto peace within. 

“Yemayá ya yo y tu lo ve 
Agua que va caer 
Qué va caer, que va caer 
Agua que va caer....”

Credits:  
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