

TRINITY BY ARISAEEL RIVERA

I am a trinity  
Divided into three  
Three I've created to make it succinct  
Though I may plant my feet for longer than you think  
I see myself as the blood within my veins,  
The creed in which I believe,  
And the art I choose to make.  
Number one shakes out this way  
I have inherited genocide from all sides  
Being Taino from the island deemed a rich port  
To Spanish, the ones who ruled and reigned with *terror*<sup>i</sup>.  
To those who came on ships with chains  
My family's tapestry makes me consider none the same  
I feel the beat of the drums, the West African djembe  
The fresh coconut used in all ways  
The rich romance of *el lenguaje*<sup>ii</sup> brought from across the sea  
I am all three  
The cries of those who died live in me  
Colors buffed out until human was hard to recognize  
But from those ashes did we rise  
More than intertwined  
We are legion,  
Many in one, alive!  
I am Puerto Rico, *pero*<sup>iii</sup> grew up in *Nueva York*<sup>iv</sup>  
Learned Spanish from birth  
Big Bird taught me ABC's and Mami made me *arroz con gandules con*<sup>v</sup> ease  
The two languages I use to think to create to dream to speak  
Are from those that conquered generations of me  
*Daka*<sup>vi</sup> all these

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I am Christian by creed, believing in Christ since I was a baby  
Listened to preachers preach about a Savior so great  
It would make me believe in the *incréible*<sup>vii</sup>  
*Danzaban*<sup>viii</sup>, they would twitch and turn and spin and sing  
The Holy Spirit said to have moved them, you see  
And I believed in that energy  
Faith split in my family  
Missionaries said something about peace  
Fruit of God's Spirit are these  
You are forever, alive from eternity to eternity  
Dust off your dress shoes and walk two years on your feet  
Preach and preach and preach  
Walk and preach and teach until you have nothing left but belief  
Baptized in waters twice so the Holy Spirit I could meet  
And ask them if Jesus truly spoke with me  
And loved me and turned to me  
And sent me here, incredibly  
Like suffering  
Every inch of his skin covered in blood for me  
And generations before and after me  
In all their colors, shades, and clarity  
Tell me, oh tell me  
How can this be?  
Like Enos in a forest,  
"Lord, how have you done this for me?"  
My hope in humanity  
My love of diversity  
My writ and spoken poetry  
All to connect to  
The One Loving Higher Being

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So, I get to number three

My art that fuels me

The stage changed the whole game when I was in fifth grade

The applause in my ears like I just hitched a rocket to space

And the sky was the limit, nothing was limited before my face

I felt here I could find grandeur and worth and feel safe

From all the lies that congregated in my brain

Making me feel worthless while love tried to engage

Turned to images to fill the holes in my hearts veins

Happy home but inside screaming to feel seen for a change

Welcome to my stage

Energy is palpable like a warm embrace

And performing solo or accompanied makes my bosom burn in any cold, cold place

I believe here, only inches from each other

Stripped of all our put upon colors

We can find more than humanity

Spirituality

And make art that does not reflect culture

But like a hammer, shapes it

Like it continues to shape me.

I am trinities upon trinities,

Conflicted and inconsistent,

Proud and ashamed,

In love, though sometimes I hate,

Feet planted though out of place,

I don't understand the man in the mirror's face,

I am more than I will ever seem,

And that's true of everyone I will ever meet,

From eternity to eternity.

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i Terror

ii The Language

iii But

iv New York

v Rice and pigeon peas with...

vi Taino for "I am"

vii Incredible

viii They danced