

White Girls That Speak Spanish Better Than Me

By Scott Duncan

How many white girls speak Spanish better than me? Lots. They invite me to rallies for destitute farmers, rebel Indian raves, ‘the best *taqueria*’ where the workers don’t speak English, and small informal ‘Latin’ parties with friends just in from *Sud America*. The White Girls Who Speak Spanish Better Than Me dance *Folklorico* or *Salsa*. They listen to militant barrio rap or pretend to like *Ranchera* or *Tejano* and try to get me excited about a singing cowboy coming to town. Eventually they speak to me in their even toned High school Spanish honed by a summer in Cancun or a ‘*pueblito*’. I tell them, “I don’t speak Spanish so good.” They turn red, ready to say something they were hoping to say the entire time, perhaps their entire life: “I guess that means I’m more Mexican than you.” Then they add, “I’m like you turned inside out.”

I tell the White Girls That Speak Spanish Better Than Me, “Congratulations, *pendeja*.”

But I don’t tell them about my grandma cooking and telling me stories about our ancestors in Alta California. I don’t tell them about my grandpa’s gentle machismo translating in his head to gruff English. I don’t tell them about family reunions in New Mexican shacks, or about the blue corn before blue corn was discovered by white yuppies, or about the hot-ass salsa that would kill the same yuppies. I don’t tell them about being spoiled by women in my family, or about the purple shirts my aunt would joke I was getting cultural in. I don’t tell them about hanging out with the only other Mexican kid in grade school because he was the only other Mexican kid in grade school. I don’t tell them about the cops or about the Anglo coworkers telling me lazy border bandit jokes and expecting me to laugh. I also don’t tell them about rednecks calling me

beaner, wetback, taco sauce, cholo, amigo, spic, vato, illegal. And I definitely don't tell the White Girls Who Speak Spanish Better Than Me how Spanish wasn't encouraged in my family because sometimes people even hate themselves.