

Artist's Statement

By Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs

The poems included in this volume, are part of my unpublished collection *How Many Indians Can We Be?* I began writing them on the plane to India, as I represented the United States, along with two other American poets in the Kritya International Poetry Festival held in Nagpur, India in 2011. This collection is about togetherness, “Sari and Rebozo” exemplify aesthetically and semantically, the communion of two opposite cultures through a traditional feminine garment. The other two poems attempt to dispel stereotypes, and unmask intra-cultural tensions, with contradictory humor.

It is only in the territory of irony, that we could understand that “Latin@” and “Indian” could signify so many cultures, identities and subjectivities, as well as different races, packed in a linguistic burrito, minimizing entire cultures, or should we say a naan or curry, both of which were also an British variations, as they exist today in England, of what exists in India, even currently?

As silly as the term Latin@ is conflating the peoples, in plural, of more than twenty countries into one (for the purpose of cataloguing us geographically for govt. agencies) and confusingly, in the minds of Americans, who might include the European notion of “Latin” as in southern Europe, so is the term “Indian,” now used by an entire nation of more than a billion.

It is a given that under different circumstances, and for varied reasons, people did not name themselves, but were named “Indian,” in the past (except for Native Americans recently naming themselves “Indian” in the interest of not being appropriated by North America). I realized the contradiction of this semantic atrocity while listening to my sons claim to their East Indian friend, years ago, as we passed a Totem Pole that they were Indian, as he dismissed their seven year old affirmation.