

I am María

Adapted from original poem by Rodolfo 'Corky' Gonzalez

By María Guadalupe Vielma

Yo soy María
Perdida en un mundo de hipocresía
I am Maria, lost in a world of hypocrisy,
caught up in the whirl of a man's society,
Confused by double standards, scorned by shame,
suppressed by sexism,
and destroyed by patriarchal society.
My mothers have lost the battle of independence
and won the struggle of self-sacrifice.
And now! I must choose between the
paradox of self-fulfillment and independence,
despite mental instability of being considered selfish,
or to be self-sacrificing of my desires for the good of family,
despite the crippling words and actions from machistas,
sterilization of the soul and the divine feminine.
Yes, I have come a long way to crossroads,
Clawing my way up the intoxicating,
draining trench called Self-Respect and Female
virtues...
I look at myself.
I watch my sisters.
I shed tears of frustration. I sow seeds of anger.
I step back into the comfort of my own power
MY OWN WOMEN
I am La Malinche, survivor and respected,
sold by her own people,
now tongue to my only possibility of life,
my pawn in the game of revenge for my destitute
I am the Spanish princess.
I am Isabella,
reigning queen of Spain.
I led my troops into battlefield, sword in hand
I plotted strategy
and tactics
to win battles for my people.
I protected the land as far as the eye could see,
Before it became property of Spain
And I feared for my beautiful Indian people, culture

and spirit
For the Spanish master who ruled with hunger over the women with a fist
could say and do as he like
But...THEIR SPIRIT WOULD NOT BE BROKEN
I was both virgin and whore.
As the Christian church took its place in God's name,
To take and use my virgin strength and trusting faith,
The priests, both good and bad, took—
But left a lasting lie that Spaniard Indian
Mestizo
Were lucky to be alive.
And from these words grew women who fought and manifested
For their own self-respect as mujeres, for that
Brief moment of liberation.
I was part in blood and spirit of that
Village priest
Hidalgo who in the year eighteen hundred
and ten rang the bell of independence
and gave out that lasting cry—
El Grito de Dolores
“Que mueran los gachupines y que viva la Virgen de Guadalupe...”
I sentence she who was I excommunicated her, my blood.
I drove her from the pulpit to be part of a bloody revolution for her and me...
I killed her.
Her head, which is mine and all of those who have come this way,
was placed on that fortress wall that still would not bring me independence.
They yelled. Morelos! Matamoros!
Guerrero!
All compañeros in the act,
STOOD AGAINST THAT WALL OF MISOGNY
To feel the hot gouge of lead which my hands made.
We died. We lived.
My country is still not free, but from Spanish rule it broke in eighteen-hundred-twenty-one.
Mexico remained my cage.
The crown was gone but its infection remained,
and ruled,
and taught, with gun and fist and mystic
Power.
I obeyed, I cleaned, I bore children, I prayed, and waited silently for life to begin.
I suffered and died like La Llorona, protector of
Her children.
I was her on scathed knees on abuser territory as she endured his last betrayals
As Lilith did to Adam.
She held her México in her hand on
The most desolate and remote ground which was her country.
And this giant little Mestiza gave not one smile's

Inch
Of her country's land to no king, no monarch, no foreign president.
I am María.
I was Generala as I fought in the revolución,
Angry and protective, a heart filled with conviction,
Nourished and inspired by the passion and fire of all women before me.
I am María de Luz Espinoza Barrera
"This land, this earth is OURS."
The villages, the mountains, the streams
Belong to las Zapatistas.
My body or hers has been the trade for soft brown earth and maize.
All of which is less than reward,
A hunger that formed a constitution for those allowed to live free.
"This land is theirs....
Madre, I wish to give it back to you.
Mexico must be free..."
I ride with revolutionists
against myself.
I am las Adelitas
Provocative and dangerous,
I am the mountain India
Watchful over all.
The thundering hoof beats are my horses.
The hands on in control of the chattering machine guns are death to all of me:
Yaqui
Tarahumara
Chamala
Zapoteca
Mestiza
Española
I have been the bloody revolution,
The survivor,
The victim.
I have abused
And have been abused.
I am the erased Jiménez y Muro
And Galindo
And the apostle of feminism,
Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz
I am
The cat-eyed
Spiritual women
Who pray with me
Or fight
Depending on the time and place
I am poet, Sandra Cisneros,

The Virgin de Guadalupe,
Tonantzín, Aztec goddess.
I shot and directed my troops in Tabasco
I created my own army of nearly 1000 men
And
No man would have guessed
the grit of
Margarita Neri
I killed those ideas of men
Who stole my voice
Who raped and killed my rights
My life.
Then I taught to stay alive.
I was Elisa Acuña Rossetti,
Making my voice heard.
I was Elisa Griensen Zambrano
Of Parral, Chihuahua
All were erased to make space in the textbooks
In the name of tradition
For the heads of 'brave' men
Who did were not brave enough to die with
Women fighting at their side
Jiménez y Muro! De la Cruz!
Nerri! Rosseti! Zambrano!
Are but a few.
They dared to be
Trailblazers
Of women who are ruled by the hypocrisy and patrimony of men
I stand here looking back,
and now I see the present,
And still I am "su vieja"
I am the dumb unintelligible cow—
Of the same name,
María,
In a country that has wiped out
All my HERstory,
Repressed all my self-worth,
In a country that has placed a
Different weight of dignity and a fragile honor upon my blessed vagina.
Inferiority is not new
The India has endured torture and still
She is refused humanity
The Mestiza must also overcome,
And la güera can choose to ignore.
I look at myself
And see pieces of me

that reject my father and my mother
And obliterate with the melting pot
To disappear in abandonment
I sometimes
Sell out my sister
And reclaim her
For my own when society gives us
The same hate
from society's sexism
I am María
Who bleeds once a month,
The pieces of Coyolxauhqui
Break apart fiery red.
My legs of Indian slavery
Dripped crimson
From the penetration of masters
Who would mix their blood so pure
When revolution made them ravenous,
Standing over the bodies they owned.
Blood has flowed from me on every battlefield between campesina, esposa, slave and
Mistress and revolution
I wrote journals of feminist ideals
Into the revolutionary rhetoric—
My country's machismo
My burial shroud
Con las Hijas
Whose passion and courage
Were too radical
For the comfort
Of the men in the culture
On our land
Now I bleed behind closed doors from fist or force or gun
I bleed as the ravenous hunger of your groin
Claims my body as your trophy
To the glamour of the prize
And lights of fame
Or mutilated dignity
My blood runs violated on the ice-caked
Hills of the Alaskan isles,
On the corpse-strewn beach of Normandy,
The foreign land of Korea
And now Vietnam
Here I stand
Before the court of justice
Victim
At the hands of my own Raza

To be neglected and abandoned.
Here I stand,
Poor in rights,
Empty of self respect
Denied humanity
Drowning in machismo
Brainwashed in marianismo
But rich in survival
My knees are caked with mud
My breasts swollen from the suckling. I have made the man rich, yet
Equality is but a wish—
The Treaty of Guadalupe has been broken
And is but another treacherous promise.
My land is lost
And stolen,
My culture has been raped
I lengthen the line at the welfare door
And fill the morgue with bruised bodies
These then are the rewards
This society has
For daughters of healers
And survivors
And daring revolutionists
Who gave a foreign people
All their children and labor
To pave the way the brains and blood
For those hordes of women-starved gold-diggers who
Stole our tongues
And plagiarized our deeds
As feats of masculinity
And of their own
They frowned upon our way of life
And took what they could use
Our art, our literature, our music, they ignored—
So they left the real things of value
And grabbed at their own destruction by their greed and avarice
They never even considered the cleansing fountain of nature and sisterhood
Which is María
The art of our great señoras,
Frida Khalo,
Izquierdo,
Cabrera, is but another act of revolution for the salvation of womankind
Cuna music, the heart and soul of the people's innocence,
The beginnings of a child
And the happiness of family
Canciones de cuna tell the tales

Of dreams, desires,
Of legends old and new, of joy of
passion and sorrow
Of the people-who I am.
I am in the eyes of man,
Shoved beneath
The sole of his boot,
Tight and callous fists
That hold the screams of daughters long forgotten,
Dead on the side of battlefield or six feet under
His gun he holds and loads continuously
Like the husband working to claim dominance
To turn around and demand
There is no say.
His eyes a mirror of all the needles
And all the hatred for me,
And I am him
And he is me
We face life together in sorrow,
Anger, joy, faith and wishful
Thoughts
I shed the tears of distress
As I see my children taken
Behind the shroud of purity
Never to look back to remember me.
I am María
I must defend
And win this injustice
For my daughters, and they
Must know from me
Who I am
Part of the blood that runs deep in me
Could not be vanquished by the Moors
I did not stand by five hundred years until their defeat
Part of the blood that is mine
Has labored endlessly for hundred
years under the heel of lustful
Europeans
I will always be here!
I have endured the rugged mountains of our country
I have survived the slaps and rapes of slavery
I have existed
On the poles of the city
In the beds of bigotry
In the halfway houses of social snobbery
In the prisons of dejection

In the muck of exploitation
And
In the fierce heat of racial and gender hatred
And now the trumpet sounds
The music of the people stirs the
Revolution.
Like a scorned woman it slowly
Plans its attack
To the sound of
Salsera feet
Clicking heels
Chanting of prayers
Fiery tequila explosions
The smell of chocolate Abuelita and
Soft brown eyes of ambition for a
Better life
And in all the fertile farmlands,
The barren plains,
The mountain villages,
Smoke-smearred cities,
We start to TAKE BACK.
La raza!
Mejicana!
Española!
Latina!
Xicana!
Or whatever I call myself,
I look the same
I feel the same
I cry
And
Sing the same.
I am the masses of my people and
I refuse to be absorbed
I am María
The odds are great
But my spirit is unbreakable,
My faith indestructible,
My blood is unquestionable.
I am Aztec royalty and Christian Madonna
I WILL ENDURE!
I WILL ENDURE!