**Noel Quiñones ‘15**

Carving / Tuning:

*after Tim “Toaster” Henderson*

*Perdonamé*

*is this enough, to barter for that American tongue, heard it can carve the memory out of anything until your throat calls the knife father, Heard you like the way it speaks English, I tried to steal it once but my family got there first:*

Nene, when are you gunna cut your hair, you know we left the Bronx for a reason, and now you look like them, what’d we tell you about stealing, next thing you know you’ll have cornrows, and if you ever get cornrows, I’ll never speak your name in this house again!

Of course Puerto Ricans come from Africa, I know that, that’s why we framed the history of our last name on the wall, isn’t it beautiful, and bleached, and half of a bloodbath’s amnesia, it has our family crest from Spain, it means “share of the profits.” Remember how important knowing your lineage is?!

Heard you call yourself AfroLatino now, how’s that working out for you? No, I’m just asking, I just don’t know where all this Black stuff came from; it’s so sudden. You didn’t grow up that way, right? I’m just baffled, can you even prove it? Prove it. Prove it!

*You ever been baffled by your own Spanglish, how it tries to lick the moon clean of its grays, knows how hard it is to be smudged shade, instead of a real color*, real, real, real, you can’t really be Black if you speak Spanish, man, come on, but you can say the n-word, I give you permission, but only if you say it with a Spanish accent.

OH MY GOD, I LOVE IT WHEN YOU SPEAK SPANISH TO ME!,

Please speak Spanish to me, please speak Spanish to me. Please spe---

*Well, I’m not fluent yet, I’m still learning…*

Then just say a sentence, or a word, how do you say love? Isn’t it amor, more, more, more, tell me more!

My friends call you my latin lover, that’s ok with you right? It’s just a joke, that replaced your name, you’re just a phase, my brother told me he saw you eating tacos on the Discovery Channel, it’s like they own you now, but he’s not racist,

every day since we’ve been together,

I ask myself, where did you come from.

Where did you come from?

WHERE DID YOU COME FROM?!

YOU SHOULD GO BACK TO WHERE YOU CAME FROM!

Where are you gunna take me now?

Is it gunna be somewhere ethnic?

Oh, the Nuyorican Poets Cafe, are all your friends gunna be there?

Whoa, it’s like the audience doesn’t understand Spanish here,

didn’t your people build this place?

What? No, what did you say?

It’s like you’re trying to tell me something,

are you trying to communicate with me?

The first word of your poem was in Spanish,

so I tuned you out.

Noel performing by special invitation at Wanpoetry open mic, Houston TX, fall 2016

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0nllQQgMvg4>

NOTES [by Noel]:

I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m so jealous of not knowing

I’m sorry, I tricked you, I never wanted you to understand me. You just always want to know where the music came from but not what it took to sing

I love how much passion you have when you entertain me

Is enough to prove this is where twilight goes to surrender