

*Mandar Obedeciendo*  
from an Urban Xicano's World  
in Seven *Travesías* on Tovaangnar/L.A.

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*Desde la selva urbana*

The city of angels is weeping.  
Its smog-filled air fills  
a skyline of towering pillars,  
bleeding onto its rows of households,  
stretching far and wide,  
communities cut through  
by the freeway circuits  
of free-flowing automobiles,  
pumping the blood of the weeping heart,  
a heart torn from the Tongva people.

What of this city and its rails?  
A movement of bodies, people,  
cultures suspended in a jurisdiction  
of killer cops, killer jails,  
killer detention centers...  
The screams of its people  
are inexhaustible,  
clouded by the exhausts of my  
metro bus line on my way to school,  
inhibiting the Brown and Black workers  
surviving the world of Capital  
surviving the world of *la hidra*

*Servir y no servirse.*  
The lies the schools teach us  
are the same lies from 1492.  
500 years of constant struggle  
against the scaffolding of history  
books sent to tame me, us, we.  
What does this knowledge serve  
if not the master's house?  
Remember the siege:  
Mexican American studies, banned.  
Ethnic Studies, banned.  
Burned books of deep,  
precious knowledge,  
Banned from the hands of  
Raza youth,  
Banned from the hands of  
Raza teachers,  
Banned from the hands of  
a community.  
But what are the master's tools  
if not the books  
that tell us we are foreigners?

Lies serve no one  
but those from above.  
How do we serve our  
People?  
How do we serve our  
*Pueblo*?  
How do we know what we know  
in our Autonomous hearts?  
We don't serve no masters,  
We obey a purpose  
Or perhaps a feeling  
That we will be free.  
We serve the people,  
The people we serve,  
We,  
The people,  
Without masters  
Only us.

*Representar y no suplantar.*  
I remember the echo  
Of a distant land,  
Lands that conquer  
Lands that bleed  
Lands that weep  
Lands that coerce the body  
Those too were my lands  
My people  
My ancestors  
Myself  
Suspended by law,  
by authority  
by a voice commanding  
telling us nothing but orders

Representing no one  
But a force of domination.  
Our bodies touch that  
Ancient code—  
a whisper of a collective  
Heart—  
A reason to speak  
A method to move  
Together and not  
Without  
We are we  
We speak as one  
We move as one  
We know together  
We feel freedom

*Construir y no destruir.*

My families converge on this dirt  
These territories of rivers, mountains,  
Deserts,  
These villages of an Uto-Aztecán tongue  
These warrior hunters,  
These people who emerged  
With acorn trees  
With nuts, berries, and trading flows.  
My families are distant relatives  
Un-becoming on their own roads  
To find home here  
In these modern metropolises  
With their suburban terrors  
And their divided lines of race.  
What is a Tongva turned Chicano?  
What is a Chicano turned Indian?  
My families diverge here

Fragmented by de-industrial ruins  
 Destroyed by Capital, by profits.  
 I grew up here tasting the bitter  
 Mexican life of slow death  
 knowing I desired life.  
 Today I see a new convergence  
 From below and with the land  
 Sowing life of seeds and laughter  
 Between Tongva and Chicano  
 Between Native and migrant  
 Between life and death  
 I see another world in motion.

*Obedecer y no mandar.*  
*Zapatismo existe en Los Angeles*  
*Una excursión por la vida*  
*Tiembra de la tierra de hormigón*  
 Tearing apart the bureaucrats  
 Toppling brick buildings  
 Filling potholes in poor hoods  
 Building from love  
 Accepting no defeat  
 Threading a weave of struggle  
*Contra los patrones de lucha*  
*Más allá del autoridad*  
 Listening to the elders  
 Hearing the children  
 Following the youth  
 I have seen the land of  
*Mandar Obedeciendo*  
 Flowering like a stalk of *maíz*  
 Or buried like a *papa* waiting to  
 See the light of the sky  
 Cultivated by a caring soil

Where the darkness sows life  
Loving waters  
Blessed by the sacred Sun  
No one person here has *la manda*  
We obey the people

*Proponer y no imponer.*

In the City of Angels  
Lives a world of overlapping universes  
A cosmic rift in cosmopolitanism  
A city-state of authoritarian magnitude  
Where the below lives in crisis  
Where the imposition of city codes  
And police  
Haunt the lives of migrants  
Black people  
Poor neighborhoods  
Hoods defending themselves  
From white or other investors  
From corporate agendas  
Gentrification  
All while Los Angeles dictates its boundaries  
Its limits  
Its threshold  
I myself an imposter  
Living unincorporated  
Deep in the streets of South Gate  
Another jurisdiction of imposed laws  
Without process of the voice of the below  
How do we enable another proposal?  
A proposal for life?  
A proposal for another kind of  
Urbanism?

*Convencer y no vencer.*

I have seen the tensions between

Anarchists

Maoists

Zapatistas

Here on the lands of Tovaangnar

The conflicts between

Mexicans

Central Americans

Black people

Indigenous Tongva

Migrants

Undocumented

Whites

Rich

Poor

People of Color

Authentic

Appropriator

I have seen the refusals

Of organized collective action

Only the embracing of solidarity

In the trenches of spontaneous rebellions

To convince the people is to do away

With our critiques of defeat

We hold in our hands

The assembly

The rallies

The marches

But do we hold in our hearts

The capacity to listen?

*Bajar y no subir.*

Through the streets of Silver Lake  
We once encountered a bolt of energy  
Filling the streets with lowriders and  
Chicanx families holding it down  
Playing those smooth oldies from  
Loudspeakers;  
We too cruised to see the below  
In action  
In commemoration  
To yell loud from a Chicanx vernacular  
“We too are still here”  
Bumping sounds in the night  
Showing in vibrant colored cars  
The voice of expressive machines  
Those delicate metal vehicles  
Bouncing up and down  
With kids racing on their bicycles  
Catching the below’s desires  
From the edges of their video-phones;  
It’s the everyday people  
Like my own family  
That we must enter through  
To assemble a different kind of movement  
Something the Zapatistas call  
A Journey for Life  
And our journey is in the urban jungles  
Of Los Angeles;  
Our autonomy is from our hearts too. 