

Adolfo González
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Between Two Worlds

The novel *Pocho*, written by Jose Antonio Villarreal, published in 1959, recounts many political, social and economic issues faced by migrant community during the years 50's, especially Mexican families. The setting of the novel takes place in two countries, México and The United States, two different cultures, where Juan Rubio is forced to leave his native country and emigrate to the United States. Years later, the protagonist, Richard Rubio "El Pocho", is born in the United States of America, who has to face many difficulties as the son of Mexican parents.

At the beginning of the novel, it can be appreciated a real problem that for years have suffered the migrant community as the family of Richard. Mr. Juan Rubio had to leave his native country México which was ruled by an oppressive government; Mr. Rubio state. (Pocho p.18 Chapter 1) "It was no longer young. It is a terrible thing to grow old in the midst of great futility". One clear example of this oppressive government was Porfirio Diaz; without doubt, dictator Porfirio Diaz was a great promoter of economic growth that at the same time increased social inequalities for more than 30 years. The diversity of jobs and the emergence of different working groups contributed greatly to the stabilization of the Mexican economy, **but** the big problems that affected the life of the working class, (Juan Rubio) were the unfair treatment and the labor exploitation to which the workers were subjected. Some of these abuses were the long hours of work performed by workers for an unfair wage, without medical care or access to a dignified education for their families. In addition to these social problems of the workers, they were also denied the right to freely elect their rulers, (Right for universal suffrage) since they lived in a regime of dictatorship by Porfirio Diaz, who did not allow free election. According to Historian Alicia Hernández Chávez, (2006) "Practically the working class lived without any social or labor guarantees" (p.90) instead they were oppressed by their employers who belonged to the social elite. Probability, this situation forced Juan Rubio to enroll and fight in the Pancho Villa revolution movement. This situation, made Juan Rubio to reflect that in México there was no chance to success and he took the hard decision to abandon his country, the same way that hundreds of families used to do. This part of the novel, is related to thousand of poor people of México, mostly from the rural community that had to emigrate to the United States of America in search of a better lifestyle, better education for their children, equality and justice, a civil right that every human being deserves, benefits that for years had being denied to them in Mexico, their country.

Analyzing the situation of Mr. Juan Rubio, it is possible to think that the Mexican Revolution, which was bloody, and claimed thousands of lives, not help much; the most vulnerable people, the working class, continued under the same conditions, in poverty without

hope for a better future. Those families, like the family of Mr. Rubio, came to this country and due to lack of education, the only option for them to work were agriculture works with a bad salary which was not enough to achieve a good education for their children and as result; they were forced to put their children to work in agricultural fields, such is the case of Richard Rubio, instead of being at school.

Continuing with this analysis, Richard Rubio, faced a religion problem, in which he was confused about how to interpret the religion, trust or not trust in God, Pocho (1959) “ You go to your church and light the candles to your God. I am finished with such things... I have left the Church... I find I am through believing... I no longer believe in God”, (p. 175). The Catholicism was introduced to the Mexican community by the Spaniard conquered by the years 1521. Chavez Hernandez, (Catholicism in the Colonial World, Ch 3, p. 51) Once the religion was assimilated, Mexican people became mostly religious; this is a very common behavior in the Mexican culture, because children are inculcated to believe in the Catholic Religion, love God, Saints, and Virgin Mary. Also, Catholic Religion is the basis of most Mexican families, but when suffering or experience difficult times in life as in the case of Richard, when he compares the darkness (Which was created by God) with evil, it is the moment that people lost their faith in the religion and in God.

In addition to the religion of his parents, Richard rejects the “machista” attitude of his father; he does not accept the way as Juan Rubio treats his wife. This is another behavior associated with the Mexican men, who believe that for being a man, they must impose their authority in the home, sometimes coming to physical abuse and humiliation of women. Also, machismo is related to the infidelity of the men as part of their identity and their culture; again, the men think that because of his status as a man, they have the right to have relations with other women outside of marriage. This situation, causes problems at home, and provoke separation, divorce, and destruction of households. As a result, children are the most affected, sometimes the eldest son of the family takes the place of the head of the family; that is the case of Richard.

In the Mexican community, love for the family is a fundamental principle that parents teach to their children while they are growing up; in the family, is where essential values such as discipline, love, and respect are promoted, and in the Richard’s home is supposed to follow the same rules, but his father broke this essential principle “Respect to her wife” that is the reason why Richard is very disappointed of his father Juan Rubio. China Hill a Columnist in the Austin Weekly states, “If you want the benefits of families values, you must established them, maintain them, and continually hold your family accountable for them” (Austin weekly, 2016), an essential principle that Juan Rubio broke.

Finally, one of the hardest obstacles that Richard had to overcome, was acculturation, a common problem among the children of Mexican parents born here in the United States. On the one hand, he feels the imperative need to belong and be accepted in the Anglo-Saxon culture, in the case of Richard, like the great majority of the children of Mexican parents. Richard goes to school, speaks English, joins the gang of the Pachucos, does everything possible to belongs and

assimilate the culture of the Anglos. On the other hand, the culture of his parents, is so strong, for being that of his origin with which he has grown; suddenly, he finds himself trapped and confused between two cultures. Finally, Richard ends up assimilating the culture of the Anglos without forgetting his parent's culture and traditions, the Mexican culture. Thus born "Pocho" with a bicultural formation strengthened and ready to defend the interests of the Chicano's future generations.

In conclusion, "Pocho", is an interesting book that narrates the real problems faced by Mexicans who emigrate to the United States and their children who are born here. The parents suffer all kinds of abuse and discrimination in the work, and their children suffer in the streets and in the schools. In my humble opinion, it's a book that hispanic community should read, to understand our history and how our past generation have fought against discrimination, segregation and injustice in order to give our migrant community recognition and respect. Poch, is a reflection of our own lives and a reflection about our existence as mexican family in this wonderful country. Despite our hard work and our social, political, and economic contribution to this country, our community (Juan and Richard Rubio) continues to be pursued by some political people; We are not given recognition or credit to our hard work. I will conclude my critical analysis with a quote from the writer Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales in his poem that says, "I am the masses of my people and I refuse to be absorbed. I am Aztec prince and Christian Christ.

I SHALL ENDURE! I WILL ENDURE.

Cites Work

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<http://www.azteca.net/aztec/chicano.html> Rodolfo "Corky Gonzales

