

Dear Brown Girl

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Adapted by Fishtank Staff



- 1 You are eternal. You are neither here nor there, but everywhere. You carry the hood in your veins and academia in your heart. You have not forgotten where you come from, but have learned and earned your way into spaces not meant for you. Spaces that are uninviting to your kind. You are poderosa like that. Your vocabulary is vast and your wit is sharp. You are unstoppable.
- 2 You feel everything and feel nothing. You carry loads of pain for the displacement you've felt due to your need to question everything. But have had to accept living that confused and living that awake because once you've heard your chains rattle, you cannot unhear them. You do this for you, but you also do this for your mami and your papi and your little hermanita who does not seem to understand herself outside the boxes that our cultura has placed her in.

- 3 You belong to no one but are accountable to many. La Raza depends on you. Do not let anyone else tell you differently. You complicate respectability politics and you do not give a fuck that you are doing it. Do you, woke brown girl. You have a fire that is burning inside of you, and that comes from your mothers side. You are going places that no one in your family has ever been and you are fearful of your fearlessness.
- 4 Your laugh carries liberation in it. Men try to pin you down, have tried to claim you, but you have resisted because you are not meant to belong to anyone. You belong entirely to yourself. No one can hold that much glitter in their hands. Glitter is messy and overpowering and beautiful. Woke brown girl, you are remarkable.
- 5 Your parents brag about your brilliance all while exhorting you to be more like their friend's daughters, who have husbands and children. But it is because you are groundbreaking, that they do not know what to do with their woke brown girl. They have not been able to hold your fire for some time now, but it is okay because it is your turn to hold them in your heart and in your mind as you dismantle oppressive structures that have kept your parents down. But not you, woke brown girl, so you owe it to them to keep fighting.
- 6 That day you stood up in class, and demanded, **yes** YOU made demands of your white male professor, on that day you recalled your ancestors who resisted and defied all odds by surviving and thriving and continuing. Remember them. Remember us.
- 7 Woke brown girl, do not let them take away your passion. And boy will they try, without any compassion, to keep you down. But remember that without passion you will extinguish, and if for some reason you do and you might, there will be other woke brown girls to pick you and light you up again.
- 8 Because, woke brown girl, we need each other.

* inspired by foremother: Anzaldua.