



# Association of Mexican American Educators Journal

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A peer-reviewed, open access journal

Volume 12 Issue 1

**2018**

**AMAE Open Issue**

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## A Subtractive Intellectualism

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Learning to socialize—as kids playing tag,  
the game evolves  
to cops and robbers, like sides of a coin, it changes to  
superheroes versus super villains  
Batman Superman Wonder Woman She-Ra  
and Captain America;  
this is who we want to be,  
who we watch on weekends —  
white heroes saving the day.

Weekdays activate “education”  
A word that means so much more in Spanish.  
A word we only know in English.  
In the early grades of school—  
White students are  
Given pens and paper  
to write their dreams,  
like a mother’s warmth, filled with hope.  
Letters to the future self

Latinx students  
are taught to use erasers –  
The erasing of a home language, to erase their culture.

Never told of our own blood.

Unable to realize

it has the power

to write and transform the world.

We are running a race and never told  
the start or finish line.

This is what we learn in school:

A subtracted identity.

trying to make a plus out of a minus

rarely realizing that school divides us.

In middle grades, the silence takes hold.

So like cattle we are tracked—

all to make assimilation easier.

Told the myth of meritocracy and taught cultural hegemony

every day—

in history class, in every moment of forced English

and every time teachers don't try to say our names.

Maybe, no superhero looks like us

Because we already have a "super power":

We are invisible, a power we never wanted.

Still we must always remember, we are intellectuals  
though we are discarded as objects by society.

After years of schooling

We must unite—

We must learn to understand privilege and whiteness

As a form of fear and guilt lived by white people

And

as a small part of us.

Whiteness as a reminder of the colonizer

A reminder of our resilient indigenous blood

And

our connection to the land.

As adults, we must fight injustice and

resist through education—

changing it as we experience it

embracing the Latinization of this country,

in supporting our seeds.

We are the future because we are the past.