



# Association of Mexican American Educators

---

A peer-reviewed, open access journal

Volume 15 Issue 1

2021

AMAE Open Issue

## Editors

Patricia Sánchez

*The University of Texas at San Antonio*

Antonio J. Camacho

*AMAE, Inc.*

## Associate Editors

Julie L. Figueroa

*Sacramento State*

Lucila D. Ek

*The University of Texas at San Antonio*

## Managing Editor

Christian Fallas-Escobar

*The University of Texas at San Antonio*

<http://amaejournal.utsa.edu>

ISSN: 2377-9187

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24974/amae.15.1.440>

**No tengo ni una sola memoria****René Saldaña***Texas Tech University*

(Canoga Park, CA)

I don't remember learning English.

Nor Spanish, for that matter.

I had to'a picked them up at the same time, though—  
at the same time both of them living in my mouth.I don't have a single memory of ever thinking  
one language was different from the other.Not one memory of me thinking *now I'm speaking Spanish*  
(or English). To me, they got the job done as needed.'Amá laughs telling me about when I first started  
talking: I was late doing it, three years old maybe?Up to that time it was me just grunting.  
I'd point a finger at a thing I wanted and grunt.She was starting to worry I'd never talk, ever.  
*Mudo*, she says. For life I'd just point and grunt.It was my sister who interpreted what I meant: food or  
a toy or to be taken up onto a sister's warm lap and held.But driving down a street one day, I pointed out  
the window and said, *Ollo, ollo*, meaning KFC chicken.But it wasn't Spanish or English I was talking.  
A kid's got to eat and say so, right?

Or he'll starve from hunger 'cuz he never said.

## El Espejo

René Saldaña

Texas Tech University

*“Nos miramos en el espejo,  
y nos vemos uno al otro.”*

--a new Chicano proverb

*Esos mochos, we whisper-shouted.*

*Chicanos pochos, they screamed back.*

*One ridiculing the other—You don't speak right.*

*Brothers and sisters ripped apart by something so simple as a river.*

*My own father among them, who crossed back and forth*

*time and again, and today recites the Pledge*

*in broken English like a shattered window. But*

*he isn't them, I told myself. And neither am I.*

*So what am I if not my father's son? And*

*what my story and my tongue?*

*I listen to the river rushing past, and*

*I hear it clearly, fluidly telling me*

*that we are all the same: brothers and sisters,*

*mothers and fathers, tíos and tías, and the primos.*

**Lost**

**René Saldaña**

*Texas Tech University*

I head to Tío Polo's shop.

He's a carpenter.

There are mounds of sawdust

on the floor, sawdust in

every nook and cranny.

I find my corner,

pull out the latest

*Kaliman, el hombre increíble,*

& read. I'm lost

in the sawdust,

lost in the adventure.

Lost in the language.

## **A Word So Much More Beautiful**

**René Saldaña**

*Texas Tech University*

(1985)

On the day 'Apá got his citizenship,  
he was asked to answer a bunch of questions.  
To prove he was deserving of this prize, I guess.

He'd learned just enough English to get by  
at work with his boss, Mike. Enough to move up  
in the concrete-laying ranks anyhow. But

today, in front of some official sitting squat  
behind his desk, a pen in his hand, who held tightly  
onto the thing my father wanted so badly and who

seemed to be shielding it from folks looking  
for their slice of the sueño americano pie,  
even if it was just a sliver of that dreamy wedge

('Apá's portion of pie looking like working his fingers  
to the marrow, mochilas full of books for his kids,  
a pillow for his tired head, food in our bellies),

that man asked one final question of 'Apá:

*What's the color of the jacket you're wearing?*

A softball lobbed down the middle of the plate,

right there hanging, the size of the whole earth, he couldn't miss,  
right? 'Apá, in his mocho's English, his accent sopping thick, said,  
*Purpo, but sorry I can't say it right in English.*

*In Spanish, though, he said, the word is morado.*

*No, the official said, it's not purple or morado.*

*Your jacket's maroon, it's guindo. But close enough.*

The jacket was 'Apá's pride and joy, a gift from 'Amá who'd been with Levi's for a decade now. Her prize now his, he wore it another ten years when he had to dress up. But that day 'Apá had no word in English for *guindo*. His reservoir mostly empty yet. He knew *close enough*, though. And besides, isn't *guindo* so much more beautiful to say than *maroon*?

**El sueño americano—**

**René Saldaña**

*Texas Tech University*

Don't it sound so much more beautiful than its English counterpart—

*The American Dream*: predetermined: baseball, apple pie, Chevrolet?

El sueño though's something to make your own and trudge towards,  
a thing to fight for if you've got to, to strive after day after day.

To fall asleep conjuring up. A brand new day every day.