

ACME

An International Journal for Critical Geographies

Revue internationale de géographie critique

Revista internacional de geografía crítica



Preguntas y frases para una nieta americana

Alana de Hinojosa

Volume 23, Number 2, 2024

Desirable Futures

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1111246ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1111246ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Centre for Social Spatial & Economic Justice at the University of British Columbia

ISSN

1492-9732 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Article abstract

“Preguntas y frases” is an imagined letter from my grandmother. It is composed of Spanish words and phrases (including missing accents and misspellings) as my grandmother, Esther, wrote them in 1983 in a series of letters she sent to my mother while my mother was living abroad in Ecuador. In those letters, Esther spoken plainly with her daughter—principally, by questioning her decision to leave the United States and asking that my mother back home to Calexico, California.

Many years after my grandmother’s death, my mother found these letters tucked away in the house attic. When my mother shared these letters with me, it was startling for me to see and hear so clearly my grandmother’s voice and way of speaking after so many years since her passing. In response, I wrote “Preguntas y frases para una nieta americana.” The title is inspired by Teresa Palomo Acosta’s poem “Preguntas y frases para una bisabuela española” in which Acosta reflects on her Spanish heritage by writing a letter to her great Spanish grandmother. In contrast, “Preguntas y frases para una nieta americana” reflects on American assimilation and what is lost, protected, and honored across three generations of Mexican American women. The letter is my imagination of what my grandmother would say to me today if she were to write me—and speak plainly—as she had with my mother all those years ago.

Cite this article

de Hinojosa, A. (2024). Preguntas y frases para una nieta americana. *ACME*, 23(2), 125–127. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1111246ar>

© Alana de Hinojosa, 2024



This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

érudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>



Preguntas y frases para una nieta americana

Alana de Hinojosa

Arizona State University
adehinojosa@asu.edu

Abstract

“Preguntas y frases” is an imagined letter from my grandmother. It is composed of Spanish words and phrases (including missing accents and misspellings) as my grandmother, Esther, wrote them in a series of letters she sent to my mother in 1983 while my mother was living in Ecuador. In those letters, Esther spoken plainly with her daughter—principally, by questioning my mother’s decision to leave the United States and asking that she come back home to Calexico, California.

Many years after my grandmother’s death, my mother found these letters tucked away in the house attic. When my mother shared these letters with me, it was startling for me to see and hear so clearly my grandmother’s voice and way of speaking after so many years since her passing. In response, I wrote “Preguntas y frases para una nieta americana.” The title is inspired by Teresa Palomo Acosta’s poem “Preguntas y frases para una bisabuela española” in which Acosta reflects on her Spanish heritage by writing a letter to her great Spanish grandmother. In contrast, “Preguntas y frases para una nieta americana” reflects on American assimilation and what is lost, protected, and honored across three generations of Mexican American women. The letter is my imagination of what my grandmother would say to me today if she were to write me—and speak plainly—as she had with my mother all those years ago.

Keywords

abuela, nieta, Mexicali, Calexico, Spanglish, loss, assimilation

Preguntas y frases para una nieta americana

Mija,

Cuando te vienes para tu tierra estaré suave. ¿No sabes de la que te estás perdiendo?

Pero sin embargo, estás conmigo y no me das miedo.

Mija,

Mandame tu retrato. Mandame todo lo que necesitas para que pueda saber como eres. Mandame flores tu Love el es lo unico que me acompaña cuando

me fui dejando todo para irme a sufrir por allá. Ayer puse techo a la casa. Fui a la playa

sonando flores. Algunos días siembro frijoles tan chiquitos que no van a crecer quienes después yo lo se nos pondrán muy tristes. Y allá aquí en la playa lloramos juntas quebradas porque pues este mundo está solo. Nos atraviesa en la casa de atrás

la casa amarilla

esa cosa fea

prieta

vieja

y loca

tan bonita

como esta playa cerrada

en Mexicali

a donde voy pintando

tu boca puntada pagando por los cuentos de aquellas flores que nos robaron.

Mija,

¿por cuanto tiempo te vas a quedar donde estás? ¿No quieres saber nada?

Aquí todo está podrido. Todo Borracho. No tengo la bodega o la cena

contigo o las flores. No estoy contenta porque antes de morirme no

podré saber que clase de hija eres.

Así que te mando el retrato de Bebe

Sigo aguantando todo la mitad de nuestra flor una pistola este choque

Que llamamos nuestro.

Ahora hare el sofá.

Voy a componer la casa bailar un balcón y todo

a la playa donde estaré durmiendo

del pajarito mas pequeño un vestido de vestidos una boda con flores

para que todo esté bien cuando

me escribas y no se como contestarte pues no sabes español.

Questions & phrases for an American granddaughter

English Translation

Mija,

When you come for your land I will be at ease. Don't you know what you loosing?
Still, you are with me & you do not scare me.

Mija,

Send me your portrait. Send me everything that you need so I may know
who you are. Send me flowers your Love the only thing
that accompanies me when I left leaving everything so I could suffer
por alla. Yesterday I put roof on the house.

I went to the beach

dreaming of flowers.
Some days I am growing beans so small they will not grow & who later
I know will make us bien triste. Y alla here at this beach
we cry together broken because pues this world is alone.
It passes us in the back house

the yellow house

that ugly thing

prieta

old

y loca

the same beautiful

as this foreclosed beach

in Mexicali

where I go

painting

your sharp mouth

paying

for the stories

the

flowers

that they robbed from us.

Mija,

for how long will you stay where you are?

Don't you want to know anything?

Here everything is rotten.

Everything

Drunk.

I don't have the warehouse

or

dinner

with you

or flowers.

I am unhappy because before I die

I will never know what kind of daughter you are.

So, I send this portrait of

Bebe.

I continue tolerating it all

this half of our

flower

this gun

this choque

we call ours.

Now I will make the sofa.

I will compose the house.

Dance

a balcony & everything

to the beach

where I stay

dreaming

of the smallest bird

a dress

of dresses

a wedding with flowers

so that everything may be good

when

you write me

& I do not know how to reply porque pues no saves espanol.