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## Development of Southern Interracial Marriage and Divorce: Why Our Children are Code-Switching

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## Development of Southern Interracial Marriage and Divorce: Why Our Children are Code-Switching

### Cover Page Footnote

"She is willing to share, to make herself vulnerable to foreign ways of seeing and thinking." - Gloria Anzaldúa

# Development of Southern Interracial Marriage and Divorce: Why Our Children are Code-Switching

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*She is willing to share, to make herself vulnerable to foreign ways of seeing and thinking.<sup>528</sup>*

## **Introduction**

For the sake of this paper, and out of respect, I refer to my father as Frank and my mother as Esme. I love them both and appreciate their efforts as parents, but this paper is necessary as a means to understanding my childhood. I write from an outside perspective, looking in on my family and the ways in which our experience shapes a new understanding of interracial code-switching.

Esme is White, with a Southern American and Jordanian background, possessing eyes commonly mistaken for the ocean with their persistence and unwavering beauty. So it would be no surprise that she married Frank, a beautiful Black man who grew up ten feet away from the ocean. Their love cascaded over seas of cheating and lies until the shore drew back revealing the inevitable: divorce. They raised three beautiful children, while he did his best to be in the life of his other son, with his first other woman. These children grew up in a home of differing tells, ticks, and tools that allowed them to travel back and forth across spaces. They didn't know why the respect they gave their father looked so different than the respect they gave their mother. It wasn't because he was angry and irrational and her more calm and stable—it was because he was Black and she was White. While this may seem to be a controversial statement, it's true—at least of my own lived experience. The divorce is not what drew these differences between them and the children, it's what highlighted them. The systems in which my father grew up in were not the same societal holdbacks that my mother had to face. In this paper, I dive into Southern interracial marriages, and more particularly of divorce. I discuss how their children have learned to code-switch amongst their own family, even and especially while in the same conversation. I pull the blinds back from the fear of the conversation to explain this: interracial children of divorce are more empathetic and kind as a result of a confusing upbringing.

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<sup>528</sup> Gloria E. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987): 82.

### **Family History**

I am focusing on the aspect of code-switching amongst mixed-race children. The specific mixed-race children I am dissecting are of Frank and Esme's children. The paper will hold the specificity of a case study with the emotion of a biography. I will shift from a third-person point of view, to a first-person point of view, and back again. It is crucial for a better understanding of what their children have gone through, are going through, and what they will continue to go through. By explaining the history of Frank and Esme, there is a perspective shift of the range of emotions that transfer into a child's interactions with their parents. The natural developments that occur as a result pour into multiple aspects of how they grow up and find their voice.

Despite the fact that Frank and Esme were married for 16 years, the concept of their marriage was still fairly new. The Supreme Court case, *Loving v. Virginia* legalized interracial marriage in 1967, only 3 years before Frank was born. Only barely in his lifetime was the option for his marriage allowed. It is not to be skewed that this court decision affected Frank and Esme's perception of love, or that they were rebellious people. It is to be understood that the nuance of the conversation we are about to have is new. It hasn't been truly studied because the children of—legal—interracial couples are still fairly young. They still have very new and very real experiences that are likely not to be understood for a few generations. Additionally, Frank and Esme were both the first to marry interracially in their families. Therefore, their children were not only passing between confusing spaces in their households but at all times amongst family and friends. They had to learn for themselves how to cross back and forth from what they learned from their parents and what they had to learn for themselves. Pulling from their family history allowed for a better chance to understand where they came from and a chance to know where they are going.

Frank and Esme's childhoods must also be understood if we are to continue our conversation. While tedious, it is vital. We would not be able to understand how their children behave if we don't understand why and how they behave first and foremost. We will start with Esme. Esme's understanding of family started before her own even began. Her devout Christian mother met her Muslim, soccer-playing father at the University of Michigan, where they hit it off and started to make plans for marriage, children, and a future. Shortly after their marriage, and their road trip across America for a honeymoon, they moved to Jordan—his homeland. They had two beautiful girls, Esme and her sister. In Jordan, they could've been perceived to have it all: money, maids, and leisure. But there was something missing—joy. Esme's mother wasn't happy. She wasn't able to practice her religion that had gotten her through so much, and she couldn't support herself in the way she could in America. For these reasons, and many more, she divorced him and moved herself and the girls back to the States. The relevancy in this resides in the fact that this was one of four of Esme's mother's divorces. All of these marriages

were for various reasons, some more traumatizing than others. Nonetheless, Esme dealt with a lifetime of a longing for a father that was in another country. She often described to her children how lucky they were to have a father at home because she spent countless nights looking to the sky and the stars hoping that her father was looking at them too. Having parents of different religions and ethnicities were likely to have shaped Esme in positive ways, for she became more understanding of others unlike her.

Unlike Esme, Frank did not have divorced parents—but by circumstance only, because they should have been. Frank's parents have a seventh and eighth grade education respectively. When they met, his mother was eighteen, already had a child, and had another on the way. Their marriage was one of necessity. It was a chance for redemption for the bastard children already circulating. They have five children together, Frank being the youngest and the only boy. Overall, Frank's father has around twenty-five illegitimate children with countless women. It could be more, but it's definitely not less. Frank's childhood was barraged with coming out stories of baby mothers, and new half siblings. So, it should be a shock to no one that the environment he grew up in shaped his perception of what it meant to have a family and honor a marriage. The relevancy in this lies in the way that his parents did not have a divorce. But, because he grew up believing that it was a man's God-given right to do as he pleases, he thought he could do the same. As his children were predestined for an already difficult life being interracial, his decisions of how to treat his family allowed for the concept of code-switching and its practice to grow dramatically and exponentially.

When Frank and Esme met and began to date, Frank decided that one just wasn't enough. If you're asking one what, I mean one child. He got both Esme and another woman pregnant at the same time. Two children, born only three weeks apart. This is not to slander Frank for his decisions or paint him to be the bad guy—it is to show that he is a victim of circumstance and his actions are of a generational cycle that plague those who do not make the effort to break it. Frank was active in the life of his and Esme's daughter, thankfully. Four years later, the young daughter grew older and, with another child on the way, Esme sanctioned an ultimatum. She said, “Either marry me, or we're leaving.” They married. It led to a marriage tormented by lack of opportunity, many challenges, and scandals covered in order to protect reputations.

The history is there to show that divorce runs rampant in my family. Even though Frank's parents were not divorced, they should have been. Frank and Esme's marriage therefore are a culmination of the things that happened before them. As a reader, I expect you to recognize this and remember that children do the best they can with what they are given. To be able to come out of circumstances joyous, kind, and community oriented is to show strength and humility.

## Definitions

In my personal experience, code-switching is one of the immediate developments that stems from having interracial parents. Code-switching can be described as “the practice of changing between languages when you are speaking.”<sup>329</sup> I speak much more specifically of interracial children between children of one Black parent and one White parent. I will point out a few important definitions. I say Black because to say African-American is to imply that one parent is physically from the country of Africa. Additionally, I have a Westernized lens because that is what I know. I speak of my personal experience, and through my own use of story-telling, so it would not be correct for me to attempt to speak from another lens while I try to prove something of my lived experience. Additionally, this may not apply to multiple points of views or experiences. I understand there will be aspects that are missing that could be added with the addition of differing variations of ethnicities. There is a chance for constant updates, reminders, and additional information that can be added at any time.

## Learning to Code-Switch

Frank and Esme are on a road trip and while Frank is driving, Esme has the radio controls. He requests Run DMC, and she puts on Dixie Chicks to follow. Neither know each other's song, but their children know and learn both. Although they may not realize it, the children are already learning elements of how to code-switch between parents. So often with code-switching you don't even realize you're doing it. You think you're just listening to music. You think you're just being yourself. You don't realize that being yourself is actually a multitude of people and personalities inside of you that is creating this one person who can carry themselves across borders and conversations. Because you don't grow up listening to one kind of music, you learn what is put in front of you. While Esme is listening to 90's country, Frank is blasting 80's hip-hop. You're insatiable in the car—knowing every song. I use music as an example to put it very simply at first. I will delve into a bit more nuance later, so I want it to be understood how code-switching can be done in even the simplest of ways.

Continuing on in another example, one of the major aspects that separated Esme and Frank was their use of everyday language. While Frank held a very central Southern tone and attitude in his day to day life, Esme's language was centered on her international upbringing. It was expected by Frank that there was a “Yes Sir” that followed any direction, command, or comment. If not, it was as though you were purposefully being disrespectful. In Esme's case, if you were trying to be especially respectful or maybe even funny she would receive a “Yes Ma'am,” but it was not always necessary. This very simple example is one of the ways how their language and location divide was highlighted to their kids. Even though the children are not learning how to speak different languages, they are

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<sup>329</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022): s.v. “Code-Switching.”

learning how to change their tone, inflection, and diction as a result of who they are speaking to. It's as if they were learning two different dialects within the same language without meaning to.

Gloria Anzaldúa did a lot of work describing the “Mestiza Consciousness,” and while her work centered greatly around having multiple ethnicities and having true language barriers, it is still extremely applicable to the scenario here of Frank and Esme’s children. She describes how “[t]he ambivalence from the clash of voices results in mental and emotional states of perplexity. Internal strife results in insecurity and indecisiveness. The *mestiza*’s dual or multiple personality is plagued by psychic restlessness.”<sup>330</sup>

I grew up constantly and consistently confused. When I was five years old I had convinced myself that my grandmother and I both had pink skin. Realistically, I was Brown and she was White, but I was so confused as to why I didn’t match anyone else in the world around me that I had to make up a scenario where I fit in. I thrived in my make believe place where I was pink and no one could reach me. I didn’t have to try to fit in other people’s boxes because no one could even see mine. It was beautiful, but more than anything it was comfortable. I was invincible. Months after I had decided I was pink, I had a yearly doctor's appointment. I paraded in, still secluded in my safe space. I got weighed, measured, and prodded until it was time to wait for the doctor. All dressed up in my oversized hospital gown, I hopped on the patient table ready for the doctor to tell me I could go back home. Suddenly, I looked over to the mirror directly to the right of the patient table and noticed my true skin color for the first time. My eyes enlarged, my skin recoiled—I felt sick and uneasy. I screamed out, asking for my pink skin back, my safety, my comfort. A multitude of bricks hit me. Somehow, with no knowledge of the world, I knew that I was no longer safe. I knew that the life ahead of me was one I wasn’t prepared for. My beautiful, comfortable pink skin diminished—leaving me vulnerable.

There has not been a day since where I have not been plagued with what Anzaldúa describes as “psychic restlessness.”<sup>331</sup> I spend my days convincing myself that my Brown, not pink, skin is beautiful. At times, I don’t know who I am. Because I don’t always know what I make of myself, it's somewhat easier to turn to others and let them decide for me. It seems as though because others cannot place me nicely and neatly into a box, they think they are afforded an opinion about my every move. They try to decide who I date, what music I listen to, what food I eat, where I shop, how I spend my free time..everything is up for grabs according to the world around me. I have been pulled into a million directions while begging to be released back into my pink skin. I have screamed and fought for my place to exist directly in the middle of the two worlds that seem to both want me, and yet want nothing to do with me at all.

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<sup>330</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 78

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*



Despite the fact that I didn't always feel welcome, I have friends of all races, ethnicities, and differences. I was able to connect with others because I had learned so many different tools having parents that were not similar. I could pick out pieces of a conversation that were relevant to something I knew and ensure that I had created a connection with someone. I have watched my siblings do the same thing. They can connect with anyone, at any time. When you have mixed-race parents, you learn how to do this conversationally at any point. Even if they don't know what the other is talking about, you have the ability to pick apart parts of the conversation that are relevant to you. It creates a safety net in your home and out in the world. You are never left wondering if you aren't enough because you fit perfectly situated in the middle. Anzaldúa writes, "She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode—nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else."<sup>332</sup> The plural personality she discusses is one I know much about. I feel a constant split down the middle in terms of how I interact and move around in the world. I don't have the option of adhering to one specific part of myself and not clinging on for dear life to the other parts. I can't choose which parts of me to protect from the world. I am, as she describes, nothing rejected and nothing abandoned. Because so many parts of myself don't fit well in a box, I do have to sustain contradictions. I can listen to Shania Twain and Tupac. I can ebb and flow into spaces despite the fact that it might make others uncomfortable. Most importantly, I create a life where I cross linguistic borders, where I make my presence one of joy, one of connection, and one of community.

### **Code-Switching After Divorce**

I never speak of Frank and Esme's difference in linguistic choices to be of a negative connotation. I choose to view the situation for what it is: circumstance. It was not anyone's active decision that they were raised differently, or that the way that they were raised affects the way they raised their children. Fortunately, Frank and Esme divorced. Their children were freed from the shackles of their unhappy marriage. Unfortunately, this meant that their "safe space," where their language choices were not guarded, was taken away. Now, they were right back to every other environment: school, work, friendships, where they had to filter themselves and become versions of themselves that were able to translate across borders. When I discuss borders, truthfully, I mean the metaphorical ones. They are the lines that are drawn between different groups of people. Despite the fact that segregation legally ended only 58 years ago with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, people still tend to naturally segregate themselves. (For additional reference, Frank is only 52). It is not to have a reflection on civil rights; all I'm saying is that people group themselves together based on like-minded or similar attributes whether this be race, gender, or sexuality. When you grow up in a non-segregated home, where

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<sup>332</sup> *Ibid*: 79



generally divided races are together, you envision that to be what the outside world is like as well. When that little slice of heaven is destroyed, it is a rude awakening into the future that awaits. Now, not only are you having to code-switch among strangers, you continuously have to do it with your parents.

It can be difficult because you’ve never done it before. You have never had to make the active decision at a specific time that you’re going to change yourself. Every other week you find yourself dropped off at the next parent's house, and you turn on the language choices you have associated with them. You recognize that the filters need to be changed, cleaned, and transferred. At some point, you come to terms with the filters and you befriend them. You take the situation as it was handed to you and decide to turn it into something positive. Anzaldúa presents a few points of relevancy here. She says,

She can be jarred out of ambivalence by an intense, and often painful, emotional event which inverts or resolves the ambivalence (...) that focal point or fulcrum, that juncture where the mestiza stands, is where phenomena tend to collide. It is where the possibility of uniting all that is separate occurs. This assembly is not one where severed or separate pieces merely come together (...) the self has added a third element which is greater than the sum of its severed part (...) a new consciousness—a mestiza consciousness—and though it is a source of intense pain, its energy comes from a continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm.<sup>333</sup>

As I’ve said, and as Gloria Anzaldúa points out, there comes a point when you, as the middle, come face to face with your differences. For example, growing up, I knew the differences in how my parents perceived the police. It was evident in our conversations, our interactions, and our intentions when coming into contact with them. I knew that my father had every right to fear the police, and I knew my mother had every right to fear them because of us and because of him. Yet, not because of herself. Her skin color was not a threat whereas ours was.

To break down Anzaldúa’s work even further, she talks about an ambivalence (the state of having mixed feelings) and how one is jarred out of it by an intense, painful, and emotional moment.<sup>334</sup> My ambivalence that was destroyed came about due to a painful and emotional event that was created as a result of finally understanding the differences that had affected me my whole life. During my parents divorce, emotions were heightened and anger ran inextricably rampant. One night, Frank decided Esme was cheating on him. The irony, if you recall his first son, with his first other woman. He threw open the doors to their bedroom, screamed at her, and decided that the solution was to take her phone.

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<sup>333</sup> *Ibid*: 80

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid*.

Besides, by virtue of the patriarchy, if that was her method of cheating, it was obviously his right to take whatever action he deemed necessary. He was the man of the house. Within seconds, their argument blew up—dragging the kids into it. Their son, their gentle, loving, considerate son, was between them. He was crying, tears streaming down his face while he begged them to stop. Their dog, who would never typically hurt someone, got so riled up by the fighting and the pushing that she lunged at whoever wasn't her master—which was Esme. The sudden bite led Esme into further justified fear. At that point, Frank left, leaving behind his family while holding onto the property he so desperately decided it was his.

This moment is where code-switching was necessary and vital for calming the situation. Esme called the police on Frank. He had taken her property, and she felt unsafe in her own home. She knew that if she didn't call for protection, she was left unarmed and unsafe. I knew that calling the police on my dad meant he was not safe, but it would make my mom feel safer. I knew that him getting caught would likely lead to an arrest and due to recent police brutality—that scared me more than my mother's desperation. I called him, begged him to come home, and to not leave his family. I begged him not to step out anymore than he already had, even though I didn't feel safe either. This is why code-switching is relevant and important. No matter what I was feeling I knew that when I was talking to my mom, I had to tell her she made the right decision. But when I talked to my dad, I had to remind him he wasn't safe either. Choices about how I was going to speak to both, and at times—neither—helped me to see that I was forever going to be stuck in the middle. I was stuck because of my skin color. I was stuck because of my parents' failed marriage. I was stuck because of circumstances. I had to use language to adapt that day more than I ever had before.

My own mestiza consciousness was born that day. At 19, I finally found my voice. It wasn't one that I got to spend my days developing. I didn't get to journal and meditate on who I was and how I wanted to be perceived in the world. I had a moment, and a split second decision, to decide what I was going to stand for and how I was going to do it. I settled into my place of being in the middle, and I successfully transferred my language back and forth, back and forth. I was operating out of fear, out of desire, but most importantly—out of love. I had to base each interaction on love. No matter what I was feeling for Frank, I had to remind myself that the love I had for him transcended the current obstacle. That is my third element that Anzaldúa so eloquently explained. The third element I lean into for my mestiza consciousness is love. Even though I knew what the circumstance was and the fact that I had the full autonomy to take a side, I had, instead, an overwhelming chance of love for both parents. I could use my code-switching ability in order to make the situation a safer space for myself and my family.

Anzaldúa wrote, and I repeat it again because I believe it to be such a pivotal and important part of the development of understanding, “a new consciousness—a mestiza consciousness—and though it is a source of intense pain, its energy comes

from a continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm.”<sup>335</sup>

The continual creative motion I believe her to be discussing is the thing that I perceive to be code-switching. It is constantly and consistently painful to feel as though you don’t have a voice because you are playing into everyone else’s. But, even though you might know who you are—you are breaking down the barriers of societal expectations. You don’t fit nice and neat into a box, and therefore you create a space that is more welcoming. You are able to connect with all people regardless of difference. And when you have these more traumatizing, emotional experiences, you also understand the nuance of pain. You turn that into joy. You choose joy. You see how people can be so mean, and so you must decide to be the light when most are darkness.

Anzaldúa furthermore writes, “I am an act of kneading, of uniting and joining that not only has produced both a creature of darkness and a creature of light, but also a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark and gives them new meanings.”<sup>336</sup> For this, I use Frank and Esme’s youngest daughter as an example. Rainey came out of the womb a burst of light. She spreads joy to anything she touches—she is always dancing, always smiling and continuously jubilant. Of course, with such high highs there are low lows. For Rainey, when she experiences sadness, she feels it in every particle of her being. She cries with her whole body; it’s as if every emotion is magnified to its fullest extent. To combat these feelings, to mellow them, she dances. She dances BIG and she dances LOUD. She dances with every fiber of her being, because without an outlet the feelings would just be too much to bear.

I believe that this is a result of being the final culmination of Frank and Esme’s marriage. She got the last stroke of love, the final push for illicit happiness. It dove into her being, into her creation, and therefore she entered this world ready and willing to spread love. It was as if her life plan was decided before she even touched the Earth. For Rainey, code-switching isn’t necessary. She seems to actively choose to speak to everyone the same. She does not censor herself. I mean, she has no time in between her dance routines. She pushes other people’s feelings to the side as she kneads, unites, and joins the lightness and darkness of others. It is her uninterrupted form of giving new meaning to the world. Because of how deeply she feels, she knows the nuance in which meanness can spread into pain—and so she chooses honesty as a form of kindness. Rainey once described dance as her therapy. It is brilliant and powerful that a child may know what it means to heal.

Rainey was born with her Mestiza Consciousness. No one had to explain to her how to be herself. She was not provided with a traumatic and emotionally

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<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*: 81

jarring event that would affect her. As another point of reference, the night of the police incident—she had pink eye in both eyes, a cold, and a dosage of sleep medicine. It was as if there were angels watching and protecting, ensuring her base of love was to be protected. She is simply able to bring the best aspects of her circumstance forward and allow the chance to surround herself with those that love and appreciate her. She was able to find dance which could show the world all the words she could not say. Her refusal to code-switch showcases the Mestiza Consciousness that lives within all interracial children and their ability to create love out of any dark situation.

### **Feminist Issue**

As I live and breathe as a feminist author, I believe this to be a feminist experience. Feminists battle for their whole lives for the chance to be seen, heard, and equal. Maria Lugones, feminist philosopher, and Elizabeth V. Spelman, philosopher, wrote: “When we are in your world many times you remake us in your own image, although sometimes you clearly and explicitly acknowledge that we are not wholly there in our being with you. When we are in your world and learn its ways.”<sup>337</sup> I explained how, as an interracial child, your sense of self is confusing. You are pulled in different directions by parents, peers, and events. All the while you are shape shifting and fitting yourself into spaces that attempt to confine you. You code-switch as a mechanism of protection. For fear of being other-ed you learn how to converse with any and everyone. This is similar to the ways in which women have congealed themselves to fit in a patriarchal society. We have been tasked with the roles of mother, wife, and sister. We have accepted these roles and played our part properly in order to ensure that we can keep our status. We want to be accepted as women, proper women, and not be challenged insofar as to have our title as woman revoked.

As Lugones and Spelman highlight, there is an ability to have one's image remade without being fully accepted in systems that create the image in the first place. Women, like interracial children, are given an image they are expected to recreate. For an interracial child, this may look like whichever parent or friend they are around at any given moment. For women, this may be the image that has to be created any time they step into a new role. The same woman she is at work may not be the same woman she is at home, may not be the same woman she is alone. For this, I present a unique example. The first child I mentioned, with the first other woman, turned out to be a spectacular, distinctive person. They experience the world through many perspectives as an interracial child, an adopted person, and a recipient of Aspergers. When we were still children, he would occasionally come over and spend time with us, more so that he could spend time with Frank or as he

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<sup>337</sup> Elizabeth V. Spelman and María Lugones, “Have We Got a Theory for You! Feminist Theory, Cultural Imperialism, and the Demand for the ‘Woman’s Voice’” in *Feminist Theory: A Reader*, 4th ed., eds. Wendy K. Kolmar and Frances Bartkowski (New York: McGraw Hill Education, 2013): 573–575.

called him Mr. Dad. Frank being a component of a patriarchal, hegemonic society that has accepted him for everything he is—got angry because my brother wore nail polish on his toes when he came to our home. It did not fit into his standards of what a “man” should be, and so he thought it his right to make demands. It was, “take it off, wear socks, or leave.” Because my brother knew who he was and was comfortable in his skin, he did not want to take it off. His adoptive parents loved him and accepted him for who he was. There was no need to remove any part of himself that made him happy. The next demand, “wear socks” was not applicable either. The aspergers made it so his sensory issues were very real, and socks were something he could not handle. It is no fault of his own—nor should it have been an expectation that he remove himself from an integral part of himself in order to please someone else's expectations of him. As a result, he left.

My brother chose his Mestiza Consciousness at that point. His emotionally jarring event left him vulnerable and at a time where he had to make a distinct decision. And he *did*.

Women have these emotionally charged, incoherent experiences everyday. Every time we are cat-called we are subjected to being only a body. When we are raped we are denied our personhood. When we are left alone with our children, when we are left alone without children, when we are left alone—we crave this ability to code-switch and to make the best we can of any situation. We strive for the opportunity to create love out of darkness, and present light to a dimming world.

### **Conclusion**

All in all, I have poured my heart out to you. I have struggled with the vulnerability aspect of this paper. I thought this would be easy—I thought I could tell my story simply and quickly. But, it was difficult. I never knew when to start and when to finish. I didn't know how to get across what I wanted to say. But, I wanted to write this because I wanted other people like me to know that they are not alone. I wanted to show that my experience is one worth sharing and one worth reading about.

The vulnerability that I have expressed is a direct result of the work of Gloria Anzaldúa. Her ability to put into words what I feel is extraordinary. She greatly influenced my choice for my topic and the way that I approached my explanations. Additionally, I wanted you as a reader to see that even if a circumstance is not explicit, there are constant underlying meanings. Even those who may seem strong are battling internal battles. From Frank, to Esme, to Rainey, and to myself—we all have carried the weight of what our lives have looked like. We are impacted by choices that were made before we were even born. We adapt as people because we have to. I hope you take away code-switching as a lesson. I hope you understand that it is protection, and it is love. By forming one's greatest insecurity into a strength, you prove that the impossible is possible. You prove to yourself that you are more kind, compassionate, and caring than you'll ever know.

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