

The i am, what gets
me the most



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The changes in the world and society brought the changes in every area of the public's life and its art, culture, and spiritual life. Thus, today the American poetry develops according to the contemporary tendencies, and a poem's performance becomes the part of the vivid action basing on a number of controversial aspects discussed in the definite piece of poetry.

The ' Slam' as a kind of poetry performance contributes to the realization of the poets' motifs and intentions in the spoken word and to the satisfaction of the audience's desire for provocations and controversies. Regie Cabico is a pioneer of the ' Slam' movement and one of the most successful its participants whose voice is not only heard by the public but also appreciated. Speaking about his origin, Cabico states that " I am the product of Filipino immigrants.

I straddled African-American & Catholic, Redneck & Suburban Middle-class life to develop an ear for English, influenced by Tagalog, Spanish and Musical Theater" (" Introduction by Regie Cabico"). Although Cabico lives the most part of his life in Washington, D. C., he is a cosmopolite in his political, social, and religious visions because it is rather impossible to define the person in the modern society as belonging to one nation or one race.

The problems of the individual's identity, spiritual development, and religious ideals are the major motifs in Regie Cabico's " Check One". Cabico's poem can be discussed as his vivid gospel with the help of which he declares his viewpoints on the meaning of the person's spirituality and identity with presenting his cosmopolitanism in all the visions including religious ones. " I

stand proudly before you a fierce Filipino who knows how to belt hard-gospel songs played to African drums at Catholic mass” (Cabico 4-6).

The poet admits the possibility to combine the culture of African-Americans and traditional Catholics. Regie Cabico’s main question in the poem sounds extremely loudly and attracts the public’s attention to the issue.

It is also associated with the hidden question about the religious aspects because the poet accentuates the peculiarities of his multicultural and multireligious upbringing. The possible explanation for the poet’s position can be observed in his words in the introduction to Poetry Quarterly, “ I will never be ‘ Filipino’ and I will never be ‘ American’. I will only be ‘ Filipino-American” (“ Introduction by Regie Cabico”).

Cabico expresses the theme of identify by the American Filipino and the theme of racial discrimination. This poem is talking about the Filipino American people’s identity in the United States and the racial discrimination that they face.

By writing that “ I could give you an epic about my ways of life or my book and you want me to fill it in ‘ one square box’”, Cabico means there is no way that classification of people with different colors produces same results since each possesses unique qualities and unique identities (Cabico 25-26). He even concludes the stanza by saying that “ there is no ‘ one kind’ to fill anyone” (Cabico 29). This is because each person is different and possesses unique qualities that are also important and all people of all races are equal.

When Cabico says that “ You tell me who I am, what gets me the most money and I’ll sing that song like a one-man caravan”, the person here is lamenting about lacking of enough money for him to use, and he says that if anyone can tell him what his true identity is and give him enough money to sustain himself, then he would sing him a song like a one-man caravan (Cabico 30-31).

The character of the person’s identity very often depends on the definite amounts of money. When the poet says that he has sung “ lullabies from welfare, food-stamps, and nature” he also illustrates how poor his living conditions are (Cabico 33).

He blames this on the government who discriminates people based on their race and he says, “ And you want me to sing one song” (Cabico 34). He is bitter about the government who expects them to stay loyal and sing the national anthem despite the fact that they intentionally discriminate against them and can force them to live in poor conditions.

In the modern society, the poet’s voice is a loud voice, and Regie Cabico combines the idea of loudness with the motifs of music and his spirituality. Thus, Cabico states that his gospel is “ heavy” and continues, “ My comedy out-loud, laughing about, our shared, / stolen experiences of the South” (Cabico 15-17).

The South with its religion and culture, with the phenomenon of the blues in music is close to the poet. “ I have danced jigs with Jim Crow and shuffled my hips to a sonic guitar of Clapton and Hendrix” (Cabico 35-36). Therefore, his world is a complex combination of spiritual visions and music expressions

typical for the representatives of the whole mankind, but not a definite nation.

The life in modern cities and towns is like a survival in the place full of vultures. Some persons can say that people should pay attention to their identities. It is also significant to focus on their self-awareness, the loudness of their voice, and the loudness of the city sounds. According to Cabico, “Would it surprise you if I told you my blood was delivered from North off Portuguese vessels who gave me spiritual stones and the turn in my eyes – my father’s name when they conquered the Pacific Isles” (Cabico 18-21).

Regie Cabico prefers to identify himself as a cosmopolite with the features of all the nations which blood flows in him because it is almost impossible to understand what culture influenced him more and gave him “spiritual stones”. Thus, Cabico follows the tendencies of the constantly changing world and avoids determining his identity. It is a kind of the poet’s survival in the world.

It is possible to note that Regie Cabico’s relations with Washington, D. C. are also based on the opposition of the necessity to be identified according to certain criteria in order to survive in the city and his personal feeling of the cosmopolitan freedom in the world where the poet’s voice should be heard.

The frames of the city can be considered as too narrow for the poet who is inclined to defend his vision. The individuality, and especially a poet, cannot be limited with the frames or norms. That is why Regie Cabico’s last words in the poem “Check one” emphasize this vision of the poet’s identity, “I’ll

check “ other,” say artist, that’s who I am; a poet, a writer, a lover of man”
(Cabico 40-41).

Works Cited

Cabico, Regie. “ Check One”. Aloud: Voices from the Nuyorican Poets Cafe.

Algartn, Miguel and Holman, Bob. Canada: Fitzhenry & Whiteside Lrd, 1994

Poetry Quarterly: Introduction by Regie Cabico. Winter 2008.