

Divided loyalties



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

I fully support the concept of " Divided Loyalties" by Gloria Anzaldua, which she presents in the form of a call for recognizing equality of rights and races, and rejecting gender and cultural prejudices. Being a poet, and a feminist, Gloria Anzaldua has a different view on the world around us. This does not mean that she sees more than we do. This only means that she might have deeper insight into the issues, which we face daily, and which we do not suppose to be critical to us anymore. Prior to discussing the concept of " Divided Loyalties", the author creates a pathway towards understanding her ideas and assumptions.

She writes about things which are familiar and close to us, and which we can easily understand. " Cradled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures, straddling all three cultures and their value systems, la mestiza undergoes a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war" (Anzaldua 100). It is not rare that we find ourselves in a mixture of several cultures. Moreover, it is not a secret that the majority of us live in mixed cultures. As soon as the borders between the states became open, the cultures have acquired an opportunity to mix.

This cultural openness has caused the two-fold effect. On the one hand, it has generated a set of new mixed cultures. On the other hand, many of us have developed a sense of hatred towards the things which are alien to us, and in her work, Anzaldua discussed this cultural negativity and societal (cultural) bias and prejudices. Anzaldua implies that not only race matters. The mixture of cultures has resulted in the situation, when many traditional indigenous cultural notions have forever changed their original meaning. Anzaldua makes special emphasis on the word " macho".

In fact, it is a very bright example of how cultures may interact. " The modern meaning of the word 'machismo', as well as the concept, is actually an Anglo invention. For men like my father, being 'macho' meant being strong enough to protect and support my mother and us, yet being able to show love. Today's macho has doubts about his ability to feed and protect his family. " (Anzaldua 105) The word " macho" is not simply an example of how cultures can interact; it is the example of how cultures can be distorted when people misunderstood their roots and reject other cultural notions.

It seems that distortion is the inevitable consequence of the cultural interaction process. While people have an excellent opportunity to take the best from other cultures and to adjust it to their natural cultural environment, they prefer rejecting other cultural values or distorting their original meaning. The concept of the " Divided Loyalties" expands beyond the boundaries of cultural distortion. It is rather the recognition of our cultural, racial, and gender limitedness. I have personally witnessed several situations when people expressed their racial prejudices against others.

The problem is that white society implicitly rejects other races, but creates an image of itself fighting for the equality of rights, genders, and other races. This is the conflict about which Anzaldua speaks, and which she makes central in her argument. Her work is critical for understanding the implications of the racial discrimination and inequality. The major problem is not in taking other races as aliens; the problem is in our reluctance to recognize that we do take other races as aliens. " Individually, but also as a racial entity, we need to voice our needs.

We need to say to white society: we need you to accept the fact that Chicanos are different, to acknowledge your rejection and negation of us" (Anzaldua 107). This is actually the first step on our way towards fairness. It is very frequent that we try to follow the standards our society promotes. We vote against racial discrimination. During meetings, we speak about the importance to recognize other cultures; but when we appear in a room with no people we call our friends to say how disgusting it is to protect blacks. Anzaldua is completely correct when she writes that " all you people wound us when you reject us.

Rejection strips us of self-worth; our vulnerability exposes us to shame" (Anzaldua 110). The author's position is understandable. Her culture and society have led her to the conclusions which she presents to the reader. Her society and her culture have also suggested possible resolutions which she offers to us as her readers. Evidently, we live in the world of extremes: we either accept/distort other cultures, or initially reject them. From Anzaldua's viewpoint, we should find the reasonable middle.

To be objective, many of Anzaldua's assumptions may seem biased to the white reader. I remember how white teachers used to punish us for being Mexican" - says Anzaldua (p. 111). " It is impossible" - the white reader will reply. Again, this is the problem, the importance of which Anzaldua emphasizes in her work: until we recognize that our society is structured according to gender, race, and other secondary attributes, we will not be able to resolve cultural conflicts. Instead of taking people as they are, we label them. Why don't men have the right to show their tenderness? Why does the expression " you act like a woman" carry negative implications for

the one who is labeled " a woman" (usually, a man)? We express our negativity towards others, but we rarely think that the same negativity may soon be expressed against us.

Conclusion Gloria Anzaldua personally experienced what racism and racist prejudices meant. She has also witnessed human reluctance and weakness in resolving cultural and racist issues. I fully support her position. She has written a profound cultural research, which ultimately serves the call for people to finally reject their prejudices and to recognize other cultures without distorting them.