

# Gloria anzaldua



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In the essay *How to Tame a Wild Tongue* from *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Gloria Anzaldua paints a moving portrait of the search for identity in a world that refuses to allow one. The physical borderland between the U. S. and Mexico helps create, but is also secondary to, the psychological "fence" that a person is put on when they are denied a culture and a place in society. Anzaldua talks about the dilemma she faced about her own language and how she represents herself through her chosen language, the confusion about their race, and what troubles she faced when teaching about Chicano literature.

Anzaldua discusses her experiences growing up between many cultures. As a woman of many identities, she has suffered oppression because of whom and what she represents in an American culture that is threatened by anyone who is not of white color. When she talks about the several languages she had to speak to get by these barriers, she encountered most issues with those of Anglos. Anglos were considered the England or English people.

Anzaldua states, "On one side of us, we are constantly exposed to the Spanish of the Mexicans, on the other side we hear the Anglos' [constant] clamoring so that we forget our language (454). She explicated the different ways Spanish people spoke, from standard Spanish to Chicano Spanish (in which consonants were dropped in some words or leave out initial syllables) to Tex-Mex (where words were English but with Spanish sounds). Anzaldua expressed it as a result of pressure on Spanish speakers to adapt to English.

Another issue that Anzaldua points out was the Chicanas or Latinas having low estimation of their native language. Women felt uncomfortable speaking

to their Latinas or Chicanas because throughout their whole lives they were absorbed into the different native tongues from generations, what school taught them, or what the media demonstrated. But Anzaldúa doesn't want to contradict herself in that form. She takes pride in her language, before she does herself (451).

When Anzaldúa first taught high school English to Chicano students, she was on the verge of losing her job just because she wanted her students to read Chicano literature. But even before reading Mexican literature, she was always interested in the Mexican movies and music; but those Chicanos who were slightly Americanized, or as they say *agringado* Chicano, felt ashamed being caught listening to their music. There was also great difficulty in acknowledging that there is more than one way of being: people fear that which is different, even though its existence is the "other" is what defines them. The Mexicans would define themselves either as *Raza* when referring to Chicanos or *tejanos* when we are Chicanos from Texas. But it's not enough to say you're *Hipic* to the Mexicans. If you were asked "what's your ethnicity", would you say you're *Hipic*: just to represent your culture or would you tell your true nationality? In finale, "yet the struggle of identities continues, the struggle of borders is our reality still," says Anzaldúa (456).