

## Learning as a MerPerson

Ana Leandro-Ramos

My blood boils and burns, sweaty hands shake because I cannot contain it.  
Ignore the voice crack because it's the oozing emotions.  
I was the mermaid who had to deny herself from her roots, a deal made with society,  
only after that did I see my voice be stolen from me.  
But you made a mistake, giving me legs to stand tall.

To navigate the upper world, to make it in a place that promised  
me benefits but to do so alone because my family was now disconnected.  
*They cry with pride as I am the one who grew legs.*  
*I am expected to get up running but it is not a flat ground... instead big hills,*  
*riders, mudslides, tornadoes...a wild life.*

I hear you laughing again, you mock me for being a savage, you blame my accent  
and accuse me of tainting your world with my practices but that was the deal.  
I used a pencil to scratch my head but then I learned the lines on paper gave me the  
power to speak louder than you ever will.  
I beg you not to taint my identity, but I guess we have both tainted each other  
worlds, but see, I know that your mark is just a simple brushstroke, never will it  
define the art piece I call my identity.  
You asked for assimilation, for me to adapt and now I am here to stay, I will not let  
you say "Sashay Away".

You gave me legs to climb that ladder and even when they buckle or you  
throw a blow by mocking my voice, I will still crawl and scratch my way  
up.

See while you made me believe my education would be a steal, the best deal, I  
quickly realized that was far from reality, see you tried labeling me by my  
nationality, making me feel as if I were an abnormality, *but while you took my voice*  
*and did not give me the resources needed to succeed...hoping I would crumble and*  
*be another statistic of someone who stumbled*

*I was silent...see I bet you did not expect me to build a skill.*

Now learning is my biggest thrill, and that passion has only begun to spill.  
Don't talk for me because I am not a siren, my purpose in speaking about my unmet  
needs will make eyes begin to widen, enough silence...  
and the thing is that I am not alone because there are plenty of mermaids and  
merman blending in with the people on land, just look around.

See because we blend, sometimes we pretend, but in the end, I become you and you became me, and we became us.

The truth is, I do have a long tail and I do have legs, but I decide which one to show you because I know the cues.

See that was your making, you asked for me to adapt and I have.

A blessing for all you to see the new creation, not entirely mermaid not entirely human.

Watch me for I am the savage who is in touch with the sea and the land, the one who learned to write with her hands and can now begin to demand.

See this is what you needed, assimilation.

Assimilation to your culture but you forgot you have always been under our persuasion.

We blend, assimilation, we brand, assimilation, this is our land, assimilation.

Always remember the deal, you gave me legs, but I had the dedication, motivation, have representation, we redefine acculturation, first generation, we demand change in legislation,

you see I speak with no hesitation,

now take responsibility for our education and relieve us from our frustration.