

**I Contain Multitudes:**

**The Importance of Self-Identity & Intersectionality**

**Key Concepts**

1. Self-Identity – it may seem obvious but for the sake of clarity, your self-identity is a combination of personality traits, abilities, physical attributes, interests, hobbies, and/or social roles from your personal identity that you specifically selected to identify yourself.
2. Intersectionality – The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination, disadvantage, or in some cases privilege.
3. White Privilege – Inherent advantages possessed by a white person on the basis of their race in a society characterized by racial inequality and injustice.

**“Afro-Latina” Discussion questions**

1. What lines in the first part of the poem indicate that the poet (speaker in the poem) had issues with her identity?
2. What would you say are some of the poet’s multiple identities? What are some of yours?
3. In what places does the poem turn? In other words, where does the move from expressing one set of ideas or emotions to another?
4. In one line of the poem the poet states: “How quickly we forget where we come from…” Why is it important to remember where you came from?” How does that impact your self-identity?
5. There is a line in the poem where the poet describes her people as a “beautifully tragic mixture / a sancocho of erased history. Do you feel like the history of your people is adequately taught in history books? Why would someone want to erase your history?

**Writing Prompts: Take 15 minutes to write about one or more of the following prompts.**

1. Write about one of your most significant memories in which you felt disadvantaged or privileged based on some aspect of your identity.
2. Write about a turning point in your life when you went from being ashamed about some aspect of your identity to feeling a sense of pride or self-acceptance.
3. Think about your multiple identities. Make a list of 10 “I Am…” statements regarding those identities and expand on some aspect of that identity. For example, if you are a Black woman, don’t just say “I am a Black woman,” try to offer other details such as, “I am a Black woman and no, you can’t touch my hair.”

Note: You can take these prompts in different directions. They could be written as a poem, a journal entry or even a micro-essay.

[**Afro-Latina**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPx8cSGW4k8)

by Elizabeth Acevedo

Camina conmigo.

Salsa swagger anywhere she go

Como '¡la negra tiene tumbao!

¡Azúcar!'

Dance to the rhythm

Beat the drums of my skin

Afro-descendant, the rhythms within

The first language I spoke was Spanish

Learned from lullabies whispered in my ear

My parents’ tongue was a gift, which I quickly forgot

Realizing my peers did not understand it

They did not understand me

So I rejected habichuela y mangú

much preferring Happy Meals and Big Macs

Straightening my hair in imitation of Barbie

I was embarrassed by my grandmother’s colorful skirts

Eh-broken inglish when she spoke

I would poke fun at her myself

hoping to lessen the humiliation

Proud to call myself American

Citizen of this nation

Hated caramel-colored skin

Cursed God I’d been born the color of cinnamon

How quickly we forget where we come from

So remind me

Remind me that I come from the Taínos of the río

The Aztec, the Mayan, Los Incas

Los Españoles con sus fincas buscando oro, and the Yoruba Africanos que con sus manos

Built a mundo nunca imaginado

I know I come from stolen gold, from cocoa, sugarcane

The children of slaves and slave masters.

A beautifully tragic mixture

A sancocho of erased history

And my memory can't seem to escape

The thought of lost lives and indigenous rape

Of bittersweet bitterness

Of feeling innate

The soul of a people, past, present and fate

Our stories cannot be checked into boxes.

They are in the forgotten, undocumented, passed-down spoonfuls of arroz con dulce

At abuela's knee

To the way our hips skip to the beat of cumbia, merengue y salsa.

There in the bending and blending of backbones we are deformed and reformed beings

It's in the sway of our song,

The landscapes of our skirts,

The azúcar beneath our tongues

We are the unforeseen children

We're not a cultural wedlock

Hair too kinky for Spain too wavy for dreadlocks

So the palms tell the cuentos of many tierras

Read our lifeline

Birth of intertwined moonbeams and starshine

We are every ocean crossed

North Star navigates our waters

Our bodies have been bridges

We are the sons and daughters

El destino de mi gente,

Black

Brown

Beautiful.

Viviremos para siempre

Afro-Latinos hasta la muerte

<https://youtu.be/tPx8cSGW4k8>