

In permanent progress as of April, 2008

**The New Barbarians:**  
A declaration of poetic disobedience  
from the New Border  
by *Guillermo Gómez-Peña*

*(Gómez-Peña began writing this performance poem in 2003 as a response to the Invasion of Iraq and the "War on Terror". His idea was "to map out a new territory in terms of 'we' and 'them". It was also the artist's homage to the voices of Pablo Neruda, the Beat Poets, Martin Luther King, Kathie Acker and Oscar Z Acosta. For 5 years, Gómez-Peña has performed different versions in universities, museums, theaters, churches, performance festivals and political rallies. Alternative versions have circulated in cyberspace and appeared in various books and websites. The artist has said that he "won't stop rewriting it and performing it until the war is finally over." This recent version, as of April 2008, is only one in a long process of transformation.)*

*(GP facing the ceiling of the gallery, theater or auditorium while chanting in tongues)*

**1. -To the Masterminds of Paranoid Nationalism**

I say, we say:

"We," the Other people

We, the migrants, exiles, nomads & wetbacks  
in permanent process of voluntary deportation

We, the transient orphans of dying nation-states  
la otra America; l'autre Europe

We, the citizens of the outer limits and crevasses  
of "Western civilization"

We, who have no government;  
no flag or national anthem

We, interracial lovers,  
children of interracial lovers, ad infinitum

We, the New Barbarians

We, the 7<sup>th</sup> generation, the 4<sup>th</sup> world, the 3<sup>rd</sup> country  
patiently waiting for Ixtaccihuatl, Frozen Mother, to wake up

We, in constant flux,  
from Patagonia to Alaska,  
from Juarez to Ramalla,

We millions abound,  
defying your fraudulent polls & statistics

We continue to talk back  
**(Shamanic tongues)**

## **2. -To the Lords of fear & Intolerance**

I say, we say:

We, mud people, snake people, tar people  
We, bohemians walking on millennial thin ice  
Our bodies pierced, tattooed, martyred, scarred  
Our skin covered with hieroglyphs & flaming questions  
We, the witches who transform trash into wearable art  
We, Living Museum of Modern Oddities & Sacred Monsters  
We, vatos cromados y chucas neo-barrocas  
We, indomitable drag queens, transcendental putas  
    waiting for love and better conditions in the shade  
We, bad boy & bad girls over 50  
We, lusting for otherness  
We, "subject matter" of fringe documentaries  
We, the Hollywood refusniks,  
    the greaser bandits & holy outlaws  
    of advanced Capitalism  
We, without guns, without Bibles  
We, who never pray to the police or to the army  
We, who never kissed the hand of a bishop or a curator  
We, who barter and exchange favors & talismans  
We, who still believe in community, another community,  
    a much stranger and wider community  
We, community of illness, madness & dissent  
    community of horny angels & tender demons  
We, frail and defiant; permanently outraged but always tender  
We shape your desire  
    while you contract our services  
    to postpone the real discussion  
We are waiting, still waiting for you to go to sleep  
**(Shamanic tongues)**

## **3. -To the Lords of censorship**

I say, we say,

We, the artists & intellectuals who still don't wish to comply  
We, who talk back in rarefied symbols & metaphors  
    against the corruption of formalized religion & art

We, critical brain mass  
fuga inminente de cerebros y hormonas  
spoken word profética, sintética  
We, bastard children of two humongous nuns:  
"heterodoxia" e "iconoclastia"  
We, the urban monks who pray in tongues & rap in Esperanto  
We, who put on masks, penachos & wigs to shout  
We, who dance against the rythms of the times  
We, who suddenly freeze!  
standing still in our underwear  
right in the center of the stage  
with the words carved on our chests:  
"Performance artist: will bleed for food"  
"Obsessive artist: will die for one idea"  
We continue to talk back...talk back...talk back...  
**(Shamanic tongues)**

#### ***4.-To those up there who make dangerous decisions for mankind***

I say, we say:  
We, the homeless, faceless vatos aquellos  
in the great American metropolis  
little Mexico, little Cambodia, little purgatory  
We, the West Bank & Gaza strip of Gringolandia  
We, the unemployed, who work so pinche hard  
so you don't have to work that much  
We, whose taxes send your CEOs & armies  
on vacation to the South  
We, evicted from your gardens & beaches  
We, fingerprinted, imprisoned, under surveillance  
within your system, without your mercy  
We, w/out health or car insurance,  
w/out bank accounts & credit cards,  
with our mennial jobs & permanent finantial angst  
We, scared shitless at ground level,  
but only at ground level  
like a pack of hungry wolves exploring the ruins of an empty mall  
**(Shamanic tongues)**  
we continue to be...together

#### ***5.-To those who are as afraid of us as we are of them***

I say, we say:

We, generic brown & black males who fit all  
taxonomic descriptions

We, who have no name whatsoever in the news

We, edited out, pixilated, censored, postponed

We, beyond the video frame, behind the caution tape

We, tabloid subject matter par excellence

We, involuntary actors of "The Best of Cops"

eternally stalking mythical blonds in the parking lot,

We, mistaken identities in your computer memory

We, prime targets of ethnic profiling & capital punishment

We, prisoners of consciousness without a trial

one single strike & we're out

We, black & brown nude bodies in the morgue

Taxidermied bodies in the Museum of Mankind

Those tortured bodies in clandestine jails speak through us

We, of the turban, burka, sombrero, bandana, leather pants

We surround your neon architecture

While you call the FBI, the NSA and "Homeland Security"

*(pause)*

You've got the weapons, we've got art

We are equally scared of one another

***(Shamanic tongues)***

### ***6.-To the share-holders of mono-culture***

I say, we say:

We, matriots not patriots

We, Americans with foreign accents & purple tongues

We, bilingual, polylingual, cunnilingual,

We, los otros del mas allá

del otro lado de la línea y el puente

We, *lingua poluta, disoluta,*

rapeando border mystery; a broader history

We, mistranslated señorita, eternally mispronounced

We, lost and found in the translation

lost & found between the layers of my words

We, Americans in the largest sense of the term

*(from the many other Americas)*

We, from Patagonia to Alaska

From Sao Paolo to New York

We, in cahoots with the original Americans  
who speak hundreds of beautiful languages  
incomprehensible to you

**We (*tongues*)**

We, in cahoots with dozens of millions of displaced  
Latinos, Arabs, blacks & Asians  
who live so far away from their land

**(*Shamanic tongues*)**

We all speak in unison therefore you cease to be  
even if only for a moment

I am, US, you sir, no ser

Nosotros seremos

Nosotros, we stand

not united

& when we talk back,

you become tongue-tied pendejos

the people you call "aliens"

are the original inhabitants of this earth

**(*Shamanic tongues*)**

### ***6.-To the masters and apologists of war***

I say, we say:

We, rebels, not mercenaries like you

We, labeled "extremists" for merely disagreeing with you

We, caught in the crossfire,

between Christian fear & Muslim rage,

We, a thinking majority against unilateral stupidity

against preemptive strikes & premature ejaculation

We reject your arms sales & oil deals

We distrust your orange alert, your white privilege

We pity your immigration hysteria

We oppose the Patriot Act patriotically

the largest surveillance system ever,

the biggest prison complex to date

We, who are never polled by Fox News

who never get to debate those TV pundits

We, whose opinions are never on the front page

of your morning paper

We did not vote for you,

do not support your wars,

do not believe in your bizarre Infinite Justice

**(Pause)**

We demand your total TOTAL withdrawal  
from our minds and bodies ipso-facto

**(Shamanic tongues)**

And when we speak in tongues, you evaporate  
And the world becomes a better place for a moment  
So...thank you for not being with us tonight

**7.-Finale:**

*(Finally facing the audience)*

We, baaaad poetry, imperfect art, unbearable noise music

We, the shamans exorcising Blackwater & Enron  
los brujos against Microsoft

We, poetas solitarios contra Wal-Mart  
dervishes under the arches of McDonalds  
radical clowns confronting the global police

We, cyber-coyotes & techno-pirates

We, the ghosts of the past  
in cahoots with the future warriors  
in cahoots with all innocent civilians killed  
on both sides of the useless War on Terror  
We, nosotros, going crazy to remain sane  
literally dying for new ideas  
performing against all odds  
dancing on the edge of the crater  
singing to postpone the irruption of the volcano  
We, Western World imploding disfunctionalia  
history's final chapter...stop!

**(Chanting)**

Per-ipsim, ecu-nipsum, eti-nipsum  
Et TV video Patri Omni-impotenti  
Per omnia, saecula, saeculeros  
Ommmm, shalom, jihad, mocos, amen...alleluia!

**(Shamanic tongues)**

Thank you for you complicitous silence