Mariposas: A Modern Anthology of Queer Latino Poetry

October 22, 2008 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

Butterflies are beautiful. The metamorphosis they go though from egg to caterpillar to chrysalis to adult is miraculous. The metaphors butterflies inspire are often motivational.

However, the word ?mariposas? (the Spanish word for butterflies) also is used as a derogatory term for gay men (in the same line of thinking as ?fairies?) in Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico and other regions of Latin America.

Some Latino gay men are using the perceived effeminacy of butterflies (In this thinking, are male butterflies effeminate by default?) to their advantage.

Mariposas: A Modern Anthology of Queer Latino Poetry is a new poetry collection published by Floricanto Press (the book is available through the publisher). Edited by Emanuel Xavier?the author of two poetry books (Pier Queen and Americano) and a novel (Christ Like)?the book includes contributions from 17 poets.

I went through a range of emotions reading Mariposas. This poetry collection reminded me how rich our Latino culture is?and how removed it continues to be from the mainstream. In that context, no wonder the lives of LGBT Latinos can seem so far removed from the rest of society.

At least three of the poets are openly HIV-positive: Brandon Lacy Campos, Lorenzo Herrera y Lozano and Joe Jimenez. The works of other poets in the book also include the theme of HIV/AIDS.

“There have been many books gathering voices from the Latino experience but very few specifically celebrating the queer Latino experience,” writes Xavier in the book’s introduction. “These poems are personifications of our souls and, like mariposas, we will continue to survive and pollinate with our words, whether in English or Spanish or Spanglish, for years to come.”

Click here to read “La Quinceañera de ALLGO” by the aforementioned poet Joe Jimenez in the November 2000 issue of POZ that reflects on what was then the 15-year anniversary of the Austin Latino/Latina Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Organization.

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