

About Sundays (excerpts)

Francisco Félix

Translation by Rolando André López

To Nicole, for the first paths

To my Mamá, my Papá and Nitzayra

Thursday January 10 | 1:50 p.m.

I'm rocking in the hammock. Looking at the cloudy sky from the balcony I share with the neighbor who washes his clothes. The machine is damaged and vigilance is a must during the first cycle to make sure there's no flooding in the balcony. It's hard for us to tell between the drizzle and the dust in the air. I remembered Kevin Fret. They say in the news he was shot eight times while he ran his motorcycle at 5:30am, at the intersection of Bellevue street with Eduardo Conde Avenue. I went out to walk home around 6:00 am. I don't remember hearing eight shots. I think it's a customary thing. The gunshots start at 8:00 pm every night. Interrupting my early morning reading. To think, "someone has just died, now, at three in the morning." I imagine Luis Lloréns Torres coming back to life, discovering that his name is associated with marginalization, violence, and oblivion. The valley of bullets.

Saturday January 12 | 4:42 p.m.

Three men and a woman discuss business and talk about movies out in theaters. I read more articles about murders in Puerto Rico. An eighteen year-old chamaco was assassinated by some buddies. I see the video of a familiar person entering the scene of the crime: a burned pastureland. A cat licks itself in front of the table where I write. The man in the video collapses on the cop when he recognizes the corpse. They all have black clothes on. It's a sunny day. In the last few weeks Puerto Rico has had a perfect climate. Many chamacos died. Sun and lead.

Thursday February 21 | 6:52 p. m.

I get home at six in the morning. On the balcony, I read some poems Amanda shared with me. I hear the currents in the power lines. The moon is still visible. My house is pretty close to Baldorioty Avenue and the airport. So far, I've dropped a crystal glass, a pan with olive oil, a little coffee on the balcony's floor. I'd drank half of it.

The sound of cars going at 70 mph on the Expressway. The neighbor gets ready to leave. It is 6:57am. First he gathers his work uniform: pants, black jacket and white sweater. He picks up a sheet stretched on the balcony's balusters. He looks at the sky, his head peeking out from the eaves. The sun's heat is a bastard. The neighbor goes to work on a bicycle.

Sometimes I forget how close I live to the airport. I get used to the sound of landing. A long drone muffled by the cement walls and confinement of my home. Two songbirds screech, sitting on the pole wires. Another two perch themselves on the rooftop of a house facing the pole.

Five or six sirens have blared out. I don't know if there's a difference between police and ambulance sounds. It's the same, someone is waiting. There's water, coffee, and olive oil strewn all across the floor. No water since six thirty in the morning. It's begun raining. I ask myself if the neighbor arrived to work before rainfall. I have to return to my confinement because rain wets the balcony.

Monday February 25 | 7:25 a. m.

Left for my house at 6:50 a.m. On a stretch of Loíza street there were four people. One, a young man with tired eyes, out from the graveyard shift with his supermarket uniform. He had a plastic Supermax bag with a bowl of food inside. A man waited sitting down in front of Ana's Cafe, like he wasn't in a hurry to be picked up. I think he was reading his newspaper.

The glare of the sun peeked through and I couldn't see right. Morning's light blinds the first to open their eyes. In the corner of a restaurant an employee picked up last night's trash. At dawn, open wastebins have overflowed, banquet for the doves. I think of the employee's life, the young man's, the lives of those of us who wait. At what time did they wake up, did their daughters get ready for school, did they salute their neighbors when they sat down to drink coffee on the balcony (as I do now). I imagine the lives of others. I wanted to give them thanks, but I didn't dare. I got out of the way so they could work. The man with the patch and the cigarette passed by my house when I arrived. Not that important. The man, I mean. What matters is that I'm home.

Thursday April 18 | 10:55 a.m.

I open all the bedroom windows for the first time since moving. The breeze makes the sun's mercilessness tolerable. It seems in Puerto Rico we are never content with the climate. It's too hot, it's rained too much in the last days, dust contaminates the air. Allergies remind me that the air is a loan. I suppose that there is a certain truth in that time heals the invisible wounds of our circumstances. It's possible that you have to swim in the wound, as Guillermo Boehler told me. I

returned to my apartment on the 16th of April after nine days in Cuba. The silence in my bedroom is intermittent. I learn to ignore alien sounds. I listen so many times to gunshots, to police sirens, the sounds of the cars, the chamacos who work the motorcycle all day, the dog always howling, the alarms. It is now almost indifferent to me.

The wind enters through the windows with intensity; only some blocks of cement are visible. An alarm has been sounding out since I began writing. At 12:49 p.m. the guys went to lunch and left the motorcycle for later.

All of one life in Puerto Rico. All that's left is time, the sea and this air full of dust that sneaks in through the nights and threatens to cover everything.

6:21 p.m.

From Rubén Ramos Colón:

If one eliminates the subject, you could be you.

Day without date or time

I tried writing a note. Erased it all. Don't know why, exactly. I want to say something, but I have nothing to say. Or maybe nothing happens beyond my balcony. The only sound is a plane landing. Or departing. It's the same, a plane crosses the sky. A chamaco enters the marquee of an

abandoned house to be tender to his ATV. I hate the sound of the motor, a lance that destroys silence. But silence is a myth in the city. The mosquitoes have arrived. I'll write later.

These texts form part of a reflective writing exercise carried out between January and May of 2019, during the program *La Práctica* by Beta-Local. The images (2016-2019) are a selection of photographs published originally on Instagram.

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(text and photographs)

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