

Fall 2003

## Ramireza

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### Recommended Citation

Clark-Ramirez, Nicole (2003) "Ramireza," *Journal of Pedagogy, Pluralism and Practice*: Vol. 2 : Iss. 3 , Article 7.  
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.lesley.edu/jppp/vol2/iss3/7>

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# Ramireza

Nicole Clark-Ramirez

*Nicole Clark-Ramirez' poem Ramirez raises questions of identity. It celebrates the assertion of her Cubanity through the reclamation of her name. [Editor]*

"I'm Spanish from Spain,  
my father's from Madrid!"  
I used to say with pride,  
"And you're 99.9% Spanish,"  
my father would finish,  
(even though I'm only half).  
He changed his last name  
from Ramirez to Clark  
when he came to America.  
But I knew that.

He told me stories about his childhood:  
an alligator and hunting dogs for pets, the girls  
he wooed, la escuela with los curas  
wielding the rulers, the walk-in bird cage,  
the wars, the CIA, and the cities he named  
or never named.

Why did he enjoy watching documentaries  
about Cuba?  
Why did my mother buy him books  
about Havana for Christmas?  
When I was 17, I asked my mother  
who I was.

My father was born in Havana.

I'm reclaiming my name,  
taking back what my father gave up.  
This pen will print Ramirez  
instead of Clark, and I'll take  
whatever Ramirez brings.  
I'll change my birth certificate to represent

la chica cubana, the woman  
I should have been.

Picadillo, plantains, black beans  
and rice; soul food my father made.  
After dinner, real espresso,  
the muscle of the fast-speaking  
cream & coffee-colored Cubans.  
Cleaning my plate with my  
new identity, I'm becoming  
Cuban again.