

# **If You Want to Know What We Are**

By Carlos Bulosan

I

If you want to know what we are who inhabit  
forest, mountain and rivershore, who harness  
beast, living steel, martial music (that classless  
language of the heart), who celebrate labor,  
wisdom of the mind, peace of the blood;

If you want to know what we are who become  
animate at the rain's metallic ring, the stone's  
accumulated strength, who tremble in the wind's  
blossoming (that innervates the earth's potentialities),  
who stir just as flowers unfold to the sun;

If you want to know what we are who grow  
powerful and deathless in countless counterparts,  
each part pregnant with hope, each hope supreme,

each supremacy classless, each classlessness

nourished by unlimited splendor of comradeship;

We are multitudes the world over, millions everywhere;

in violent factories, sordid tenements, crowded cities,

in skies and seas and rivers, in lands everywhere;

our numbers increase as the wide world revolves

and increases arrogance, hunger, disease and death.

We are the men and women reading books, searching

in the pages of history for the lost word, the key

to the mystery of living peace, imperishable joy;

we are factory hands field hands mill hands everywhere,

molding creating building structures, forging ahead,

Reaching for the future, nourished in the heart;

we are doctors scientists chemists discovering

eliminating disease and hunger and antagonisms;

we are soldiers navy-men citizens guarding

the imperishable will of man to live in grandeur.

We are the living dream of dead men everywhere,  
the unquenchable truth that class memories create  
to stagger the infamous world with prophecies  
of unlimited happiness—a deathless humanity;  
We are the living and the dead men everywhere...

## II

If you want to know what we are, observe  
the bloody club smashing heads, the bayonet  
penetrating hollowed breasts, giving no mercy;  
watch the bullet crashing upon armorless citizens;  
look at the tear gas choking the weakened lungs.  
If you want to know what we are, see the lynch  
trees blossoming, the hysterical mob rioting;  
remember the prisoner beaten by detectives to confess  
a crime he did not commit because he was honest,  
and who stood alone before a rabid jury of ten men,

And who was sentenced to hang by a judge  
whose bourgeois arrogance betrayed the office  
he claimed his own; name the marked man,  
the violator of secrets; observe the banker,  
the gangster, the mobster who kill and go free:

We are the sufferers who suffer for natural love  
of man for man, who commemorate the humanities  
of every man; we are the toilers who toil  
to make the starved earth a place of abundance,  
who transform abundance into deathless fragrance.

We are the desires of anonymous men everywhere,  
who impregnate the wide earth's lustrous wealth  
with gleaming fluorescence; we are the new thoughts  
and the new foundations, the new verdure of the mind;

We are the new hope, new joy, new life everywhere.

We are the vision and the star, the quietus of pain;  
we are the terminals of inquisition, the hiatuses

of a new crusade; we are the subterranean subways

of suffering; we are the will of dignities;

We are the living testament of a flowering race.

If you want to know what we are—

**WE ARE THE REVOLUTION!**

*(1940)*