





good about myself. As a pre-schooler, I already had the chores of chopping firewood and hauling in fresh water each day. After “heavy work,” I would run to her and flex what I was convinced were my gigantic biceps. Grandmother would state that at the rate I was going I would soon attain the status of a man likeon atadult males in the village. Her shower of praises made me feel likeon atMr. Indian Universe of all time. At age five, I suppose I was as close to that concept of myself as anyone.

In spite of her many years, grandmother was highly active in the village ceremonial setting. She was a member of an important women's society and attended every traditional function taking me along to many of them. I'd wear one of my colorful shirts she handmade for just such occasions. Grandmother taught me appropriate behavior at these events. Through

colorful dress. She wasn't plump and friendly. Her clothes were one color and drab. Her pale and skinny form made me worried that she was very ill. In the village, being more pale than usual was a sure sign of an oncoming fever or some such disorder. I thought that explained why she didn't have time just for me and the disappointed looks and orders she seemed always to direct my way. I didn't think she was so smart since she couldn't understand my language. Surely that was why we had to leave our "Indian at home". But then, I didn't feel so bright either. All I could say in her language were "Yes teacher", "My name is Joseph Henry," and "when is lunch?" The teacher's odor took some getting used to also. In fact, many times it made me sick right before lunch. Later I learned from the girls this smell was something she wore called perfume.

The classroom, too, had its odd characteristics. It was terribly huge and smelled of medicine like the village clinic. I feared so much. The walls and ceiling were artificial and uncaring. They were too far from me and I felt naked. Those fluorescent light tubes made an eerie drone and blinked suspiciously over me. This was quite a contrast to the fire and sunlight my eyes were accustomed to. I thought maybe the lighting did not seem right because it was man made and it wasn't natural. Our confinement in rows of desks was another unnatural demand made on our active little bodies. We had to sit on these hard things for what seemed like forever before relief (recess came midway through the morning and afternoon). Running carefree in the village and fields was but a sweet memory of days gone by. We all went home for lunch since we lived a short walk from the school. It took coaxing, and sometimes bribing, to get me to return and complete the remainder of the school day.

School was a painful experience during those early years. The English language and the new set of values caused me much anxiety and embarrassment. I couldn't comprehend everything that was happening, but I could understand very well when I messed up or wasn't

doing so well. Negative messages were communicated to effectively and I became more and more unsure of myself. How I wished I could understand other things in school just as well.

The conflict was not only in school performance but in many other areas of my life as





performing of certain ceremonies were already only a memory that someone commented about now and then. Still the two worlds were very different and the demands of both were ever present. The whiteman's was flashy, less personal, but very comfortable. The Cochiti were both attracted and pushed toward these new ways which they had little to say about. There was no choice left but to compete with the white man on his terms for survival. To do that I knew I had to give up part of my life.

Determined now that I left my home that dreadfully lonely night. As I made my way back to school, my right hand clutched tightly the mound of cornmeal grandmother placed there and my left hand brushed away a tear.