



# INTER-AMERICAN SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING



# GABRIELA MISTRAL

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- Gabriela Mistral (1889-1957) was a Chilean teacher, poet and diplomat. First Latin American, and to date only Latin American woman, to win the Nobel Prize for Literature (1945).
  - Poetry about her land, maternity, faith and death.
- Her first poetry collection was published in the US, *Desolación* (1922). In 1924 was invited to visit the Pan American Union. This is when she gives the speech.
- As a diplomat she traveled and lived in the US and Europe, and throughout Latin America. Lived her final years and died in New York.

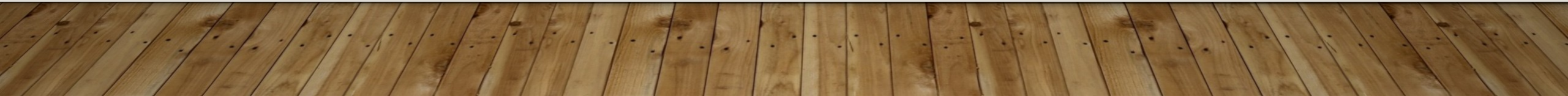
# "GIVE ME YOUR HAND" (FROM *TENDERNESS*, 1924)

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Give me your hand and give me your love,  
give me your hand and dance with me.  
A single flower, and nothing more,  
a single flower is all we'll be.

Keeping time in the dance together,  
singing the tune together with me,  
grass in the wind, and nothing more,  
grass in the wind is all we'll be.

I'm called Hope and you're called Rose:  
but losing our names we'll both go free,  
a dance on the hills, and nothing more,  
a dance on the hills is all we'll be.



# “GABRIELA MISTRAL AND INTERAMERICAN SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING”

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- Speakers at the 1924 event in the Pan American Union building in Washington DC. What kind of figures are these?
  - Leo S. Rowe – Director General of Pan American Union
  - H.A. Colman – President of League of American PEN Women
  - Charlotte Williams – National Educational Association
  - Grace Abbott – Chief of Children’s Bureau
  - Beltrán Mathieu – Ambassador of Chile
  - Isabel Keith Macdermott – Translator
  - Gabriela Mistral

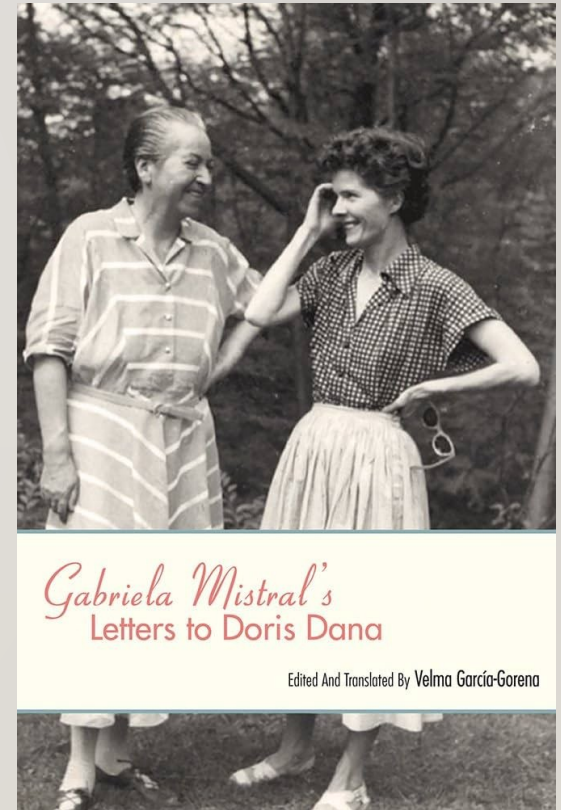




# "GABRIELA MISTRAL AND INTERAMERICAN SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING"

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- What is the tone of the gathering?
  - Rowe: Mistral "belongs to the entire continent" (649).
  - Colman: "In the highest sense a patriot, [Mistral's] broad grasp of national needs has embraced the Pan American ideal as the solution of national betterment..." (649).
  - Mathieu: "Strong bond of union" (651).
- Going beyond the national, towards internationalism.
- Our question is: Why is Mistral and her work being celebrated as representative of Pan American unity?



Mistral and Doris Dana

# "GABRIELA MISTRAL AND INTERAMERICAN SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING"



First edition of *Desolación*, 1922

- What is the tone of the speech? How can we compare it to the ideas of Martí, Darío, Rivera and Kahlo?
  - Celebratory and hopeful of the possibility of connection between US and Latin America **Spirit**
  - But is a connection based on ...
- Does she think Latin America and the US are very similar or different nations?
  - They are different (652). Different speeds, points in development (653). But, is this a bad thing for Mistral?
  - Not at all – no “inevitable discord”. This diversity is good for the spirit.

# "GABRIELA MISTRAL AND INTERAMERICAN SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING"

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- What is Mistral's perspective towards indigeneity? Why does she focus on this? Pg 653.
  - Connection between Indian's work on lacquer and the poet's ability to write.
  - Indian has no "highly developed faculties" because he is "ignorant of the higher Christianity".
  - But, both are equals because both have "the same light of revelation in the moment of artistic creation".
- Idea of "dissimilarity without inferiority"?
  - The US must see that Latin America is the same, despite its economic or political issues.

Noble  
savage?





# "GABRIELA MISTRAL AND INTERAMERICAN SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING"



Mistral and Mathieu,  
1924

- On pg. 654, she starts talking about religion and faith as a connecting element between US and Latin America.
  - Religion is a possible pathway to Pan American unity: whether you are a Quaker or a Catholic.
  - Not politics - she says she has "nor any leanings towards politics. I am not even a suffragist". Why do you think she wants to stress this?
    - Play down potential conflicts between US and Latin America.
  - Religion "higher" form of community than politics or economics, even intellectual life.
    - Play down the material aspects, favors the highly abstract ideal of "spirit".
    - Replace immediate political relations with "a spiritual movement" of cooperation – this way, avoid interventionism and



# WHY MISTRAL?

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Why is Mistral and her work being celebrated as representative of Pan American unity?

- Mistral's poetry is "clear" to understand.
  - "Rustic", "earthen", familiar.
- Plays down all forms of material conflict (political, economic). Doesn't mention US history of interventionism or imperialism in Latin America.
  - However, does show some subtle critiques towards US (act first, think later).
- Favors a more abstract "spiritual" connection, based on love through Christian faith.  
Dissimilarity without inferiority.
- Very Pan American: focuses only on the good side of cooperation, while mostly erasing the violence of US power in the region.