Two Names, Two Worlds

In the poem below, Jonathan Rodríguez reflects on his name. How does his name “place him in the world”? How is it a mask, shield, or container?

Hi I’m Jon.........No — Jonathan
Wait — Jonathan Rodríguez
Hold on — Jonathan Rodríguez
My Name, Two names, two worlds
The duality of my identity like two sides of the same coin
With two worlds, there should be plenty of room
But where do I fit?
Where can I sit?
Is this seat taken? Or is that seat taken?
There never is quite enough room is there?
Two names, Two worlds
Where do I come from?
Born in the Washington heights of New York City
But raised in good ol’ Connecticut
The smell of freshly mowed grass, autumn leaves
Sancocho, Rice and Beans
The sound from Billy Joel's Piano Keys
And the rhythm from Juan Luis Guerra
I’m from the struggle for broken dreams
of false promises
of houses with white picket fences
And 2.5 kids
The mountains and campos de la Republica Dominicana
And the mango trees
I’m not the typical kid from suburbia
Nor am I a smooth Latin cat
My head’s in the clouds, my nose in a comic book
I get lost in the stories and art
I'm kinda awkward — so talkin' to the ladies is hard
I listen to Fernando Villalona and Aventura every chance I get
But don't make me dance Merengue, Bachata
Or Salsa— I don't know the steps
I've learned throughout these past years
I am a mix of cultures, a mix of races
“Una Raz encendida,
Negra, Blanca y Taina”
You can find me in the parts of a song, en una canción
You can feel my African Roots en la Tambora
My Taino screams en la guira
And the melodies of the lyrics are a reminder of my
beautiful Spanish heritage
I am African, Taino and Spanish
A Fanboy, an athlete, a nerd, a student, an introvert
I'm proud to say: Yo soy Dominicano
I'm proud to say, I am me
I am beginning to appreciate that I am
Una bella mezcla
I am beginning to see that this world is also a beautiful mix
of people, ideas and stories.
Is this seat taken?
Or is that seat taken?
Join me and take a seat,
Here we'll write our own stories

1 Jonathan Rodríguez, untitled poem. Reproduced with permission of Jonathan Rodríguez.
**Sancocho**: a traditional Latin American stew

**Juan Luis Guerra**: a Dominican singer-songwriter

**Campos de la República Dominicana**: fields of the Dominican Republic

**Fernando Villalona**: a Dominican merengue singer

**Aventura**: a bachata music group

**Merengue, Bachata, Salsa**: styles of dance

**Una Raz encendida, Negra, Blanca y Taina**: A race that is Black, white, and Taino

**Una canción**: a song

**La Tambora**: Percussion instrument used in merengue

**La guira**: percussion instrument used in the Dominican Republic

**Yo soy Dominicano**: I am Dominican

**Una bella mezcla**: a beautiful blend

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