

2022 POETRY OURSELVES CHAMPION

Crossed and Cautious

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where are you from?

the first of many an endless inquisition

I am from Mexico.

you reply

hands in your lap, crossed and cautious

the confusion is mutual

mutilating

you don't look like me and I don't look like you

then speak Spanish.

the words hang in the air

suspended

all of us are too young to understand that color is not a prerequisite for citizenship

speak Spanish.

not a question

but a demand

saying

prove yourself to us

prove yourself to people who don't know you

mixed messages manipulate

mutilating

this country is not yours yet

and yet

you aren't seen as part of your home country either

you shake your head

look down at your lap

hands crossed and cautious

no llores, no llores, no llores

you tell yourself

see guys? I told you she doesn't speak Spanish.