

When You Tell My Story
by Pam Garrett

Write that I came from
pine trees, red ant hills, and
sticky summers
but always wanted to roll away, like the rolling hills
I saw all around me
Pressed against an Eastern sky
Pushed toward a Western sunset

Write that I left them-
workers trying to get to God
by working harder and harder
Under-the-skin racists
sweating hate, wiped off
before anyone noticed

When you speak of me say
that in some ways
I was like them-
not to rude to chat with the
grocery store cashier, the
mailman, the mechanic
fond of "Yes mam" and "No sir"

Fried okra, fried green tomatoes,
and fried catfish

When you tell me story,
make me an adventurer
who knew it was time
to go-
who took one final
opportunity to roll/drive/float
away

never to be hard from again
except in gossipy legends
told before service.

starts at

Hayden United
Methodist Church

When you tell my story-
make me strong,
a survivor who had
to figure it out
for herself,
And still does

Write That I...

✓ Great -
type up
for
bonus

Write that I am an only child,
Of two very loving parents,
Who make sure I turn out to be,
A good and happy person,
With a life that is better than theirs.

Write that I am an immigrant,
From Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.
I came with my parents in December 1989,
Fortunate enough to travel by plane to the United States,
And start over a new and better life.

Write that I have overcome separation,
From my family in Vietnam,
And from my father for several months,
When I first came to America.

Write that I can't forget where I came from.
A communist country with yellow-skinned people,
Who have suffered through the war,
And a poor economy,
Although things have been improving.

Write that I am bilingual,
Fluent in Vietnamese and English.
I am intelligent in both worlds,
And will use my language skills for the better.

Write that I refuse to turn my back,
On family and friends.
I will never be unfaithful, backstabbing,
Or deliberately hurtful to the ones I love.

Jaime Cota

Write that I grew up on the border,
a shadow U.S. citizen
where I lived with Donald Duck
and Ed Sullivan whose English
sliced my Tijuana tongue
with their jingles.

Write that the only money
I knew in Mexico
burned images of US heroes —
Washington, Jackson, Lincoln —
on my Tijuana palms.

When you speak of me
say that I was pressed against the mouth of the monster
tell those who will listen that for a boy on the border
it was easier to buy a twinkie in the US
than a tortilla in Tijuana.

When you tell my story
say that I refused to learn English:
Refuse to speak the invader's tongue,
refuse to be a Tijuana shadow
on a US border wall.

Linda Christensen

—When You Tell Mi Historia
Lorna Fast Buffalo Horse

Write that I am Mexico del Sur.
I am Oaxaca, Chiapas, Guerrero, the Yucatan.
I am like the source of a strong, proud river,
beautiful, powerful, ancient
and I have survived colonization, war, poverty.

Write that I share myself willingly, my coffee beans, the sunshine and maize.
Know that my people are tied to me,
are a part of this tierra and can't all leave.
Say that the first to go have been the men
on a too-long journey north to la frontera
To the USA,
to find work
and hope
and possibly survival.

Say that a few made it over that line,
past the fences and guards, under the walls,
between the sensors and in spite of the lights,
the river,
the heat,
the mountains,
desert,
the coyotes.

When you tell my story,
remember those men,
the ones who laugh through their pain and desperation,
who are not completely worn down by the struggle
and never forget their mothers, wives, companions, daughters and sons,
never forget their grandfathers and grandmothers,
their cousins and comadres, their copadres and homies.

Never forget the ones who could not cross into el norte,
who live in fear in Maclovio Rojas,
who cannot escape the squalor and contamination of Chilpancingo,
whose names and ages hang frozen in time on white crosses
on the Tijuana border wall,
the ones who live to clean a defective Hyundai transmission
and the ones who die and die and die to leave me, the South, alone.