Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Jenise Miller: Two Poems

Jenise Miller · Wednesday, September 18th, 2019

Dolphins

Yolanda "Yo-Yo"
Whitaker whipped crimped,
blonde braids and bragged
the earrings I wear are called dolphins
and I became bigger
bigger than my block
bigger than my neon green and black
biker short set copped
from the swapmeet
where airbrushed tees, corduroys, and rows and rows and rows of gold
were sold like the dolphin earrings
my father bought, four gold
dolphins, connected two by two at the nose, and I was rapt
by these shining creatures
swimming toward each other
bouncing daily from the ears lobes
that foretold my skin tone from birth
and Yo-Yo
grew like me
from streets
of gray and grace
and rapped
me golden like
dolphins break the light
above ocean waves,
make surviving the deep
look easy.

*

Jacarandas

I stem from a place defined by color: red and blue
of poinsettias and jacarandas, gold of acacias. We danced beneath pastel, jacaranda petals

that painted Indigo Street an occasional blues, rode bikes next to piru queen palm trees on Greenleaf Avenue, hopped-scotch on bougainvillea-lined sidewalks on Myrrh Avenue, picked lemons, oranges, avocados, and a crown of star-jasmine from backyards on Poplar Street. Tropical trees waved in the breeze at Park Village like parts of Samoa, Mexico, Louisiana. Tamarind Avenue was palette and paleta. Alameda Street was pastoral and al pastor. The names of streets patterned like lines in the sienna-brown leaves that grace the ground in fall:

Acacia Street

Spruce Street

Arbutus Street

Rose Street

Elm Street

Palm Street

Poinsettia Avenue

Willowbrook Avenue

We never learned

about the native

trees or that jacarandas,

like so many of us

were transplanted

here and bloomed.

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