

Mi Problema
By Michele Serros

My sincerity isn't good enough.

Eyebrows raise
when I request:

"Hable mas despacio, por favor."

My skin is brown
just like theirs,
but now I'm unworthy of the color
'cause I don't speak Spanish
the way I should.
Then they laugh and talk about
mi problema
in the language I stumble over.

A white person gets encouragement,
praise,
for weak attempts at a second language.
"Maybe he wants to be brown
like us."
and that is good.

My earnest attempts
make me look bad,
dumb.

"Perhaps she wanted to be white
like THEM."
and that is bad.

I keep my flash cards hidden
a practice cassette tape
not labeled
'cause I am ashamed.
I "should know better"
they tell me
Spanish is in your blood.

I search for S.S.L. classes,
(Spanish as a Second Language)
in college catalogs
and practice
with my grandma.
who gives me patience,
permission to learn.

And then one day,
I'll be a perfected "r" rolling
tilde using Spanish speaker.
A true Mexican at last!