

Cruz

We all bore the curse.

My brothers bore theirs
like the cross in their last
name.

My curse was red and came from
Eve,
their curse was brown and came
from my stepfather

(the real reason my grandmother
hated him).

Bronze had burned her
and it would light through them
like flames along an El Dorado
skyline.

the white wooden house we came from
did little to save them when
their eager bodies moved
 from space to space
their boredom and frustration
becoming frenetic energy

the white coats, later, only added letters
to teachers notes and signed
prescriptions to be filled
 something to keep them still.

Their curse was a cloak of visibility

Brown bodies
in a white world.

dear white people

we stopped slamming
like that in 1992;

you should look towards
your own past too sometime.

We'd look at our own,
except we don't have one.

dear white people
you came to save us,

from ourselves
and the dimness
in our marrow.

dear white people
thank you
for giving us Christ
and the one drop
that redeemed
some of us.

dearest of white people
please teach us how
to speak more loudly,

like you do,
when we talk
about where we are from.

Passing

me and jlo, faked our way
into something real,
mastered the art of mimicry
before either of us knew

we were always better
at pretending to be other people.

watch her in living color,
twirl and twist,

we both knew she couldn't
be that girl,
fire burning
around her hips

but when you put us
in front of a white screen

suddenly, our tongues
give us away.

Even blonde,
we aren't california girls
either.

Talking White

I often wonder what it would be like
to speak blue
to weave words like cerulean and indigo
along the edges of incisors.

What would fuchsia
sound like?
-would it flake apart in my mouth
like the soft pink flesh of salmon.

Coffee seems tougher to master;
its roots tangled deep within the edges
of my throat.

Here, everyone's tongues echo quartz,

while I can only manage eggshell;

breakable pieces clinging
to the yellow strands of
this morning's breakfast.

Natalie N. Caro is a Quarter-Rican, Bronx-born poet and educator. She holds an M.F.A from City College/CUNY, where she was selected as one of the first recipients of CCNY's M.F.A. Creative Writing Fellowships, as well as a B.A. in English Literature/Philosophy from Lehman College/CUNY. She is the winner of the 2013 Bronx Recognizes Its Own (BRIO) award in Artistic Excellence for Poetry. Her work has appeared in *Keep this Bag Away From Children* and *Frost Writing*.