

From White to Brown the Evolution of my Skin Color

By Valerie Denise Paez

I was reprimanded in grade school
for using the tongue I only knew

I was surrounded by the White world
un Pais unfamiliar to me

They marched in
and colonized la única piel that I had

My mother tongue was cut from me
and stored in a rusted jar in a cupboard

That jar grew thick ivy around it
cutting off the oxygen to the flesh within it

With each day my colonizers
murdered a piece of me

My skin color no longer
that from when I originally submerged from my mother's womb

I was now what my colonizers wanted
me to be...I was now White

I wore this new skin with heartache

Twenty-five years later

I stood there watching mi gente
llorando over the casket of Bis-Abuela

The Mariachis played
canción after canción

As I saw her body be
lowered into the earthy grave below

I was rebirthed
I traveled through my mother's birth canal this time
claiming my Brownness

The rusted jar containing
my fleshy tongue was shattered

In those moments

My mother tongue found its way to my body

Where it was welcomed with open lips

Where it was to remain
until mi muerte.