

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Kaela Westfall: "Family Poem"

Kaela Westfall · Wednesday, February 6th, 2019

Family Poem

after "The Idea of Ancestry" by Etheridge Knight

My cheekiness tells me I'm human
but my mouth says aloud
I'm Filipino and Puerto Rican.

My mom is one of four
born here in L.A., not in the Philippines.
They praise God with a cross on the wall
and prayer at dinner, but shrines in the house
only exist for the conservative traditional.

Tagalog is the language, but we only learned
Tito for my 4 uncles and Tita for my 4 aunts.
Second cousins are all my age
but first cousins have barely been born.

We're full on Christmas on sinigang and adobo
with the occasional Popeye's chicken and biscuits.
My mom has tattoos on her temple of a body
that to older generations would look desecrated.
My mom tells me to be what I want to be.
There are too many nurses in families.

My dad is the one and only and his family
consisted of his mother and grandmother
that went through too much, and his stepfather
that taught him how to live and be.
Born in Cleveland, Ohio, sometimes
Cleveland sports were his family too.

Football was the best friend since his hands
were able to grasp, and the Browns had become

a part of the family culture.
There's even a painting of them framed in our house.

My dad has two halves but only knows one.
Puerto Rican arroz con gandules, tostones, ropa vieja, frijoles—
it's all we've come to know but it holds a special place.
Grandma's love and care harvested in the flavors
of every plate we take for granted.

My 2 little brothers and I love our family very much.
My 2 little brothers and I hate each other very much.
We do have our traditions,
where we go for holidays,
how we worship if at all,
when we watch the games each week,
but looking at the cultures that we are,
we definitely aren't very traditional.

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