

Learning to love America

By Shirley Geok-Lin Lim

because it has no pure products

because the Pacific Ocean sweeps along the coastline
because the water of the ocean is cold
and because land is better than ocean

because I say we rather than they

because I live in California
I have eaten fresh artichokes
and jacaranda bloom in April and May

because my senses have caught up with my body
my breath with the air it swallows
my hunger with my mouth

because I walk barefoot in my house

because I have nursed my son at my breast
because he is a strong American boy
because I have seen his eyes redden when he is asked who he is
because he answers I don't know

because to have a son is to have a country
because my son will bury me here
because countries are in our blood and we bleed them

because it is late and too late to change my mind
because it is time.

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Born in Malacca, Malaysia, Shirley Geok-Lin Lim was raised by her Chinese father and attended

missionary schools. Although her first languages were Malay and the Hokkin dialect of Chinese, she was able to read English by the time she was six. Lim emigrated to the United States after college, settling eventually in California.

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