

The Contract Says: We'd Like the Conversation to be Bilingual

By Ada Limón

When you come, bring your brown-
ness so we can be sure to please

the funders. Will you check this
box; we're applying for a grant.

Do you have any poems that speak
to troubled teens? Bilingual is best.

Would you like to come to dinner
with the patrons and sip Patrón?

Will you tell us the stories that make
us uncomfortable, but not complicit?

Don't read the one where you
are just like us. Born to a green house,

garden, don't tell us how you picked
tomatoes and ate them in the dirt

watching vultures pick apart another
bird's bones in the road. Tell us the one

about your father stealing hubcaps
after a colleague said that's what his


kind did. Tell us how he came
to the meeting wearing a poncho

and tried to sell the man his hubcaps
back. Don't mention your father

was a teacher, spoke English, loved
making beer, loved baseball, tell us

again about the poncho, the hubcaps,
how he stole them, how he did the thing

he was trying to prove he didn't do.



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