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

By Ada Limón

When you come, bring your brownness 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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