



PHONETIC SHOCK

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Poetry Contest - First Place

On the sentimental days I read articles like “Top 10 Iconic African Trees” and their names are as natural on my tongue as the word mother.

The Jacaranda blooms in brief lavender bursts, a reminder of when the British colonizers hated the muted tones of the Marula—

I don’t know if they named it, but I know they named Mt. Kilimanjaro when they couldn’t pronounce the tribal nomenclature for the hill.

I pronounce baobab as its intended “boah-bab,” then mispronounce it like “bahh-oh-bab,” just to feel like I belong

in America, where my second grade teacher pronounces wildebeests like “wild-a-beasts,” because it’s all she knows.

