

MORENA

Aunt Mary was brown skinned
and her sisters called her "Nigger."
When my father and mother and brother and me
went to her house she said,
"Sit down. Sit down. I'm making some tortillas.
Sit down." So we did.
She put the flour in the bowl
with water and salt and a handful of crisco.
Then she mixed it with her hands
making it into a white ball.
We sat there in the kitchen and watched
and when she wasn't looking, we took a little ball
from the bowl and ate it raw.
She rolled out the dough on wax paper
then peeled the white disc off
to then pat it between her palms.
She dropped the tortilla onto the hot pan
on the stove.
The smell filled the room.
She handed me a tortilla.
She handed my brother one.
"Where's mine?" my father said.
"Kids first," Mary said.
The butter on that fresh tortilla
made a dish I thought fit for Montezuma.

There are piles of tortillas in the Lucky Market.
Everyone eats them now.
But I'd rather have one of Aunt Mary's tortillas
right now, than a fifty buck dinner at Ma Maison.

-- Rafael Zepeda

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