

Dark Child

I love latkes
and brie.
Beef bourguignon
and Irish breakfast tea.

They call be *bougie*
and of my lifestyle make jokes.
They say I'm *uppity*
and my *black card* needs to be revoked.

They—whose black history education
is isolated to calendar dates.
They—who don't know the names
of the many who are so worthy of praise.
They—who let pop culture
constrict who they are meant to be.
They—who know nothing
of the core of my identity.

I am a daughter
from a long line of single mothers
who could write anthologies on how to sacrifice.
Educate you on where you came from
and give you the tools you need to make it in life.
I am the descendant of women
who didn't know how to quit.
Who bore half a dozen children and more
and still took strangers in.

Women who smiled through their struggles
and taught me how to grind.
Who were proud of the lives they led
but for me—they wanted more for mine.

These women who taught me about the
Mohegan in me.
The Italian—
The American—
As well as my slave ancestry.

I grew up in a home
founded on hard work and integrity.
Where we listened to Sam Cooke
and Elvis Presley.
Where we ate collard greens
and black eye peas.
Baked Challah bread
and Italian ziti.
Where you went to school
or you got a job.
Where you might not have had much
but you always had love.

I like imported vodka and single malt scotch.
Crazy Horse, Old E *AND* Sauvignon Blanc.
I like grits and cheese and grease biscuits.
Beef Wellington and mid rare steak... bone in.

This is not a fucking tan
This is who I am.
Daughter of Phillis, granddaughter of Charlotte
and all the *Phenomenal* women before them.

They gave me confidence
and taught me self-worth.
They taught me humility
and the value of hard work.
They taught me tolerance
and to appreciate creativity.

They educated me in acceptance
and the art of civility.

Their hands—the color of
chestnut, olives, peach, sandalwood and mahogany.

Their hearts—enormous, giving and unconditionally forgiving.

Their backs—strong, dependable, sturdy
and how I made it this far in life.

How dare *you* try and shame *me*
when it's you who has no pride.

