

# Résonance

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## achievement

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## achievement

by Kate Pashby

as a child, I was chronically not enough  
not white enough to look related to  
my blonde-haired and blue-eyed cousins  
not Filipinx enough to fit in at  
my Southeast Asian grade school  
and not Mexican enough to speak a lick of Spanish

a third-generation Mexican American  
whose mother never learned Spanish  
because that's what my grandparents  
spoke when they didn't want  
their daughters to understand

as a child, my strongest connection to my Mexican heritage  
was my American girl doll Josefina  
the dark-skinned girl from 19th-century Santa Fé  
my grandparents who raised me for two years  
must have spoken Spanish with me  
(according to language acquisition theory)  
because I can mostly roll my Rs

but my mother seldom cooked Mexican food  
because it was "too unhealthy"  
and she rarely took us to the panadería  
to buy "Mexican bread" because it too was unhealthy  
cholas in hoop earrings and red lipstick were "ghetto"  
while taquerías and taco trucks were "dirty"

in high school, as an aspiring ballerina,  
I gave my mother an ultimatum:  
let me take French classes  
or give me a quinceañera  
I was made to take Spanish and  
I received no quinceañera

in high school, as a teenage prodigy  
and professional slacker I earned the  
Hispanic Achievement Award  
along with the two "white Mexicans"  
in my overachieving senior class

I was so incensed at being labelled  
good for a Mexican  
that I faked period cramps  
and laid on the rickety cot in the nurse's office  
for the duration of the award ceremony

after college, upon receiving my bachelor's degree cum laude  
I was rewarded after the graduation ceremony  
by being mistaken for the valedictorian  
(a Southeast Asian woman I had never met)  
because all brown people look the same