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“On Affirmative Action” Tammy Ronique Williams

Born in Moscow Russia and raised in Kingston Jamaica, **Tammy Ronique Williams** is a third year student at the University of Toronto. She is pursuing an Honours Bachelor's Degree in English and Caribbean Studies, with a minor in Russian. She hopes to someday become a published author.

So...
You want to take my picture?
put it on your website?
class yourself among they that *honour* diversity?

You want to exotize my tongue,
tug at my hair,
then boast images of my black skin
in your track bottoms and throw back tees
as if I am any more than a minority?

I'll pass
cuz I'd much rather not
sit in to fill in the blended shades
of your acceptance packages.

I don't want to be your
one
in
few
little island girl,
your affirmative action friend.

I can't promise to take you on wicked cool adventures
through my 'local' mind
portraying a Jamaica more exotic than I know!

I am not your june plum,
don't pick at me for grasping my mother-tongue
It's b-a-s-i-c-a-l-l-y,
not basically
and when the time comes
I speak patois not broken English.

You think you know me
'cause you can hum the tune of I shot the Sheriff?
or 'cause at her hotel gift shop,
your friend bought you a t-shirt
made in China,
Jamaica, no problem?

I don't live in a tree,
or in a hammock on the beach,
neither do I know any monkeys.

Can't wrap your brain
so you want to wrap your fingers
around the tight curls of my mane,
since I'm Jamaican and Marley's hairstyle
and mine aren't the same?

My friend said I'd get a job
if I took black, gold and green off my resume,
I asked her WHAT THE HELL else I was suppose to say.

Centuries of hot whips,
blood, tears, sweat, milk,
sugar, gold, cotton, silk
and suddenly I don't possess the skills?

Canadian on appropriation,
you point your fingers,
turn your nose
and clutch your chanel,
only you seem not to realize,
you're an immigrant yourself.