

## *Common Tongue*

Afternoons abuzz with the coming warmth of summer  
Kids running through yards  
Laughter echoing between houses  
This was my street how I liked it best

My dad always called  
our street  
"A mini-United Nations"

Honduran  
Black  
Chinese  
Pakistani  
Caribbean  
Mexican  
White  
Indian  
Each one a family

On those days,  
when my street was how I liked it best,  
And all of the grandmothers  
Gathered in someone's front yard  
Communicating  
Without a common tongue

I'm convinced now  
They spoke the language of community

## *You Can't Put That on a Shirt, and other things about boarding school.*

One morning, we awoke. To pictures of llamas on some of the doors. So we printed out manatees, and put them on the rest. No one should feel left out. In the end, a manatee shakes hands with a llama on a shirt that we all wear.

There is no room, for pettiness, exclusion, or even unkindness.

Not when academic pressure eats away at you. And you need every one of the people around you to get you through it.

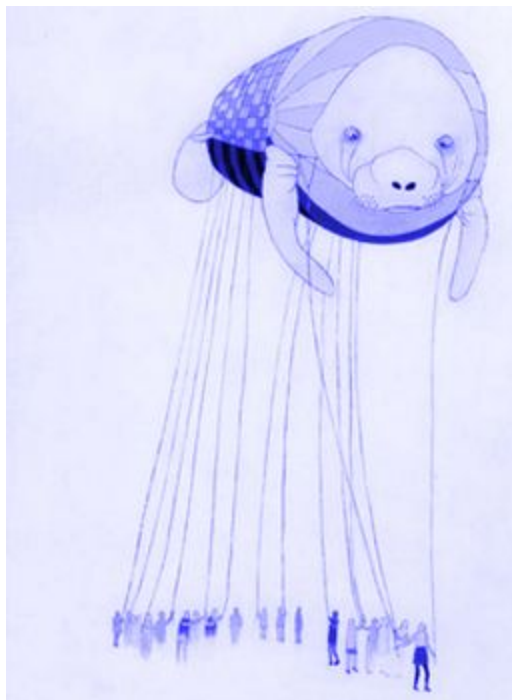
They say that "misery loves company." We couldn't think of a more perfect saying to put on our class shirts.

"It won't reflect well on the school."

I don't remember what we put on the shirts.

But I do remember the community that made hell bearable.

It was full of manatees and llamas.



## *Sometimes: a poem for Minnow Bly*

Sometimes a community  
Can be a prison  
And a prison,  
a community

Sometimes,  
A community can be  
The one person  
you've ever felt  
Yourself around

Sometimes,  
A community  
Is that place you make up  
In your dreams  
Never truly believing  
It could exist

Sometimes you decide  
Once and for all  
That the community that laid claim  
To you  
Has no rights  
Over your body,  
or your mind.