

Not Spanish

Not Spanish. Not black. Not Mexican, not Cuban, or Puerto Rican. Not Jewish, or Persian, or Indian. Not Brazilian. Not South American either. No, it's not the same thing. It's different. Nope. Portuguese. Just half. No, my mother was born here but she is still all Portuguese. My Gramma was born in Maui but she's all Portuguese. And my mother's father was all Portuguese too. My Gramma's maiden name was Gomes also, just like her husband's last name. Not Gomez, but Gomes. Gomes is the Portuguese spelling. But at school they all say, what are you anyway? We wear the same uniform, the same blouse and sweater, the same socks and shoes. The same plaid jumper. But I am darker. From laying out in the sun and swimming all the time. They say, you're not tan. You're just like that! No, not always.

When my mom was a girl, her father said, "Get out of the sun! Cover up!" Because he liked her skin nice and white. White like her mother's. He said it was bad to let your skin get dark. But me, I don't care, I let it get dark. Let 'em ask. And my mom says, go on outside. You should be out in the fresh air, in the sun." And she gives us all an otter pop or push up. An Alexander The Grape or something. Something that makes your mouth all purple. Just something to keep you cool in the sun.

Not Spanish. Not Mexican. Not South American. Not even Brazilian. Just Portuguese. And when I have kids, they'll probably just be a quarter. Then an eighth. Then one sixteenth and so on. Until no one knows. But they'll be all Portuguese, as much as my mom, so long as they remember. They'll be all gramma, and my mom, and me. They'll be all of us. Full of stories. Not half, not empty. Full. Full of memories.

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