

puerto pican discovery number 40, poem for evelina antonetty

to build a house  
begin with mud  
soft, cold, pliable to the touch  
not too wet, nor dry  
a smooth consistency  
for shaping whole and solid

offer it to the sun  
for strength and durability  
wait until it is returned  
hardened like the mountains

find the land that is close to your heart  
measure the size of your plan  
from it's most extreme dimensions and depths of perception

draw a circle on the ground  
pray there for one complete day  
study the weather closely

build your foundations in exact proportions  
engineering the details  
of space, weight and balance

be careful to follow the path of the sun  
draw your water from the moon

flatten the edges by a perfect plane  
slowly laying in the walls, centuries of inheritance  
each generation a floor  
let the cornerstones be monuments to grandmothers  
let the flower beds be celebrations to grandfathers  
let the rooms divided up be tributes to brothers, sisters,  
cousins, uncles, step-sons, daughters-in-law, parents and grandchildren

keep half of the closets—only half  
get rid of pushers, dealers, wheelers, cheaters,  
greedy landlords, and other social diseases  
get rid of abuse, molestation and incest—get rid of it!  
get rid of crime, nuclear war, attitudes that kill and destroy

just keep those places where tender memories are stored  
that teach histories unwritten:  
like chango chasing yemayá while oyá prays in the cemetery  
somewhere in the heart of mozambique where obatalá is king

leave lots of space for windows, trees and sunsets  
with a wide red door chiming songs of hope  
opening easily to the touch,  
yet strong enough to block out the flood

listen to the birds  
watch the leaves falling and the new buds emerging  
walk through the snow  
be cleansed by the morning  
bless yourself in the ocean  
pray

and most important:  
love the children—  
love the children  
love  
    the children.

© 2009 sandra maría esteves, *new and selected poems*