In an Office Where I Work

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In an Office Where I Work

Cleaning lady,
Why did you not answer me
When I said hello?

Just pushed around your dented
carpet sweeper, hunched over, close to the floor, gleaning the specks
of paper or crumbs
Left by women who hold higher
positions than you.

But I said hello
And you looked away, flinging
open your new trash liners, making balloons
as they caught the air

In this office where
Educated women chatter and gossip, sipping
coffee and eating dry roasted soy
nuts; ignoring you as you pick
up after them and everyone
else that walks through the department, spreading
rock salt from the street
All over the rust colored carpet . . .

I said hello to you
And you did not answer me.

Now I am silent.

--Monica Hopkins