

## My side of town

by Faustina Bohling

Please find a field of dandelions  
Somewhere along East Washington street  
Along a vein that pulses working class blood to the  
heart of my city  
Appreciate it enough to find us there  
Within the youthful stomping grounds of the North  
side, Darbo or Atwood  
Pushing down roots into a thoroughfare of belonging

You may think to overlook it

Sometimes seen past as an automatic function that  
causes this city to breathe  
Granted, we do move instinctively  
Appearing in silhouettes of Oscar Mayer, Kipp, and  
Rayovac  
Now relocated, renamed or the same  
Listen closely you may hear the echoes of our parent's  
names within Morse code of time cards

Find them trading what feels like thankless for hours  
Pouring themselves into molds of aspirations  
For next generations

We move about on sturdy roots  
Still lean towards the sun  
Knowing it still rises here  
Even though it's missed between 1st and 3rd shifts  
Or second jobs

Look and you may see first blooms along bike paths and  
bus stops  
Liquor store signs and high interest check cashing  
Parading achievable dreams pushed up through cracks  
of "impossible"  
Welcome banners from the East

Reminders that this beauty, on this side of the tracks,  
is the balance of survival and low end street credit  
Not missing the daily warnings  
The possibility of being cut down to size

All lessons to be learned  
Or unlearned

All in all, supporting the bruises of hard knocks  
learning what to trust  
Is what you do on my side of town  
Here is where we build more than backbones  
We search for fields of dandelions  
Places for children  
So they can spend idle hours where our parents sweat

The East side

I always feel its arms  
Hear it's sounds of trains  
lulling me to sleep  
Pressing on me where I'm from  
like waiting pennies on tracks  
Flattening tenacity hard continually into my skin  
Feel it's arms grow wider and wider  
Expanding into developments  
I feel the neighborhoods push and pulse, rooting  
... Gentrifying

And I worry about the dandelions  
Fields and fields of tenacious, overlooked flowers  
Worry they will get lost, pushed around  
... or away

Please appreciate them like I do  
Because there are children who still play here