

My side of town

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 its 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 its 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

-Faustina Bohling

Bio: Faustina Bohling grew up on the East side and has a strong affinity to the Williamson and Winnebago neighborhoods, and currently resides on the West side/Middleton. A graduate from UW Madison, BA Sociology, a mother of three wonderful sons and one daughter, she has read at Genna's spoken word scene, The Wisconsin Book Festival, UW Milwaukee and other venues. She has also hosted The Speak Easy open mic at the Cardinal bar.

