

Evolution of My Block

By Jacob Saenz

As a boy I bicycled the block
w/a brown mop top falling
into a tail bleached blond,

gold-like under golden light,
like colors of Noble Knights
'banging on corners, unconcerned

w/the colors I bore—a shorty
too small to war with, too brown
to be down for the block.

White Knights became brown
Kings still showing black & gold
on corners now crowned,

the block a branch branded
w/la corona graffitied on
garage doors by the pawns.

As a teen, I could've beamed
the crown, walked in w/out
the beat down custom,

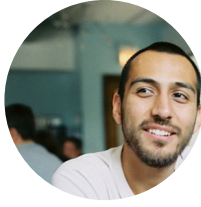
warred w/my cousin
who claimed Two-Six,
the set on the next block

decked in black & beige.
But I preferred games to gangs,
books to crooks wearing hats

crooked to the left or right
fighting for a plot, a block
to spot & mark w/blood

of boys who knew no better
way to grow up than throw up
the crown & be down for whatever.

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Poet and editor Jacob Saenz was born in Chicago and raised in Cicero, Illinois. He earned a BA in creative writing from Columbia College in Chicago. His first collection of poetry, *Throwing the Crown* (Copper Canyon Press, 2018), was awarded the 2018 American Poetry Review/Honickman First Book Prize. Saenz has been an editor at *Columbia Poetry Review* and an associate editor at *RHINO*. He works as an acquisitions assistant at the Columbia College library and has read his poetry at a number of Chicago venues. A CantoMundo fellow, he has also been the recipient of a Letras Latinas Residency Fellowship and a Ruth Lilly Poetry Fellowship.

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