


Greed

By Philip Schultz

My ocean town struggles
to pick up leaves,
offer summer school,
and keep our library open.
Every day now
more men stand
at the railroad station,
waiting to be chosen for work.
Because it's thought
the Hispanics will work for less
they get picked first,
while the whites and blacks
avoid the terror
in one another's eyes.
Our handyman, Santos,
who expects only
what his hands earn,
is proud of his half acre in Guatemala,
where he plans to retire.
His desire to proceed with dignity
is admirable, but he knows
that now no one retires,
everyone works harder.
My father imagined a life
more satisfying than the one
he managed to lead.
He didn't see himself as uneducated,
thwarted, or bitter,
but soon-to-be rich.
Being rich was his right, he believed.
Happiness, I used to think,
was a necessary illusion.
Now I think it's just
precious moments of relief,
like dreams of Guatemala.
Sometimes, at night,
in winter, surrounded by
the significant silence
of empty mansions,
which once were cottages,
where people lived their lives,



and now are owned by banks
and the absent rich,
I like to stand at my window,
looking for a tv's futile flickering,
always surprised to see
instead
the quaint, porous face
of my reflection,
immersed
in its one abundance.

Source: *Poetry* (July 2013)