


# 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)