

Patchwork

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I'm from rolling waves that tickle my toes at the edge of the sand.
I'm from square green lawns framed by cement sidewalks and 9 to 5 jobs.
I'm from boxy brown houses contained by busy streets and liquor stores.
I'm from hard won successes of ancestor immigrants to this land.
I'm from new hope born in lost dreams and life sustaining struggles.
I'm from Chicago.

Just one tiny stitch in Old Boss Daley's patchwork quilt of neighborhoods,
I'm from callused fingers and long hours bent over a sewing machine.
I'm from cracked grey vinyl seats at the front of rickety public buses.
I'm from loading docks, sturdy shoes, bar stools and familiar smiling faces.
I'm from grumpy old men reclining on bus benches keeping eye on the block.
I'm from aching backs, weary eyes, open arms and soft welcoming bosoms.
I'm from Chicago.

Bound by a complicated matrix of inclusion and exclusion,
I'm from the sights, sounds, smells and unique rhythms of one north side enclave.
I'm from dogs marking their territory, community picnics, swing sets
and strict boundaries established by busy streets and railroad tracks.
I'm from gossiping neighbors, organized watch groups and vigilant suspicious eyes.
I'm from a city bifurcated by red and blue lines, baseball teams,
generational allegiances, poverty and possibilities.
I'm from constellations of identities fractured through a prism of advantages and disadvantages.
I'm from all of this.
I'm from Chicago.

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