

POETRY CORNER

my ma met mary madonna at a bustop in Chatham

By Harlem West

& they both stood straddling the fence mid solstice tilting with housing wombs exhaling exhaust
Blue Magic & Sulfer8 both sick of scattered men in their beds with their outside clothes on
neither knowing how to water a tiny god. mary madonna offered my ma a new set of
collateral skins. these ones would grail mahogany and age slow sum dark, like cognac or all
the fallen griots in our bloodline but my ma declined content with her inherited freckled
fury and olive undertones. say, we worked hard for this genetic midnight,
pulled double shifts to see our breath in the cold waiting for a bus on some soil
that may never love us back. so mother mary asks “where your people from?”
to which my ma replied with a tall drag from her square, recalling lady day and the folks
scattered like willows her grandmother left in Arkansas. miss mary nodded and says
“how long have you been waiting?”. of course,
my ma kept her eyes for the 87th east bound.

“not too long”

harlem west is a poet, archivist, and community garden from 87th and Cottage. they write to recall collective memory. they write up truths their dead folks reveal to them in dreams and such. harlem's work has been featured in the North Branch and APOGEE journals.

Poem curated by Stuti Sharma. Stuti is a poet, stand up comic, writer, filmmaker, but most importantly, a lover. She grew up on Devon street and the south suburbs. They are a Tin House 2023-2024 Reading Fellow.

A biweekly series curated by the *Chicago Reader* and sponsored by the Poetry Foundation.

Hours

Wednesday & Friday: 11:00 AM–5:00 PM

Thursday: 11:00 AM–7:00 PM

Saturday: 10:00 AM–5:00 PM

Letras Latinas 20th Anniversary Reading & Panel

Join us for a two-day celebration of Letras Latinas's 20th Anniversary, featuring Dr. Grisel Y. Acosta, Diannely Antigua, Jasminne Mendez, and Yesenia Montilla.

Reading: Thursday, March 21 at 7:00 PM CT

Afro-Latinx Poetry Now Panel: Saturday, March 23 at 2:00 PM CT

Kara Walker: Back of Hand

Foregrounding Walker's long-term engagement with language and text, this exhibition features works completed in 2021 and shown for the first time in Chicago.

Open through May 18, 2024.

Learn more at PoetryFoundation.org

