Daniel's Song

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Author Bio
Mauricio Novoa is a senior at Gettysburg College from Glenmont, MD (DMV stand up!), finally getting published in something that isn’t a notebook. An English major with a Writing Concentration, most of his works are social justice based, looking at the social elements that affect everyday people in America, thanks mainly to his work with the Center for Public Service and his mentor, Kim Davidson. He would also like to shout out Jeffery Rioux, Gretchen Natter, Tammy Hoff, and Professors Meyer and Melton for adding to the art.

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I sit my younger brother on the steps
Of the only house he's known
On the corner of Georgia Ave and Urbana,
Prime rush hour zone
By the bus stop in Glenmont,
And he rocks Chuck*’s, high tops,
In black and red, like my J’s*,
Both brands from my block.
He’s a little skater boy, same style
His friends roll with on the street,
While I match the dudes
Chillin’ outside 7-11, drug dealer chic.
His skin’s dark, and mine’s light,
But ironically his life
Has been a little easier than mine,
Though our roots are wrapped tight
In brown soil on white land, unfertile,
Though we grow and spread.
I guess with him we all made sure He
never saw our garden was dead Like
we did, looking out our windows To
see hoodlums and struggle.
Just because we weren’t in the ghetto
Doesn’t mean we weren’t in the jungle:
Dudes with hats with their favorite teams
And brand names on their shirts and jeans
And old heads in Nautica and Nikes
Starting to rip at the seams
And single mothers with another
Bun in the oven all going to make that bread.
Like a scary movie, some of these images
Never get out of one's head.
He asks me about college,
And how much do I enjoy it,
And how much easier it’ll be for me
to go out and find employment.
I look him in eyes the way I did
One morning when he was five
And got home from the hospital
After a seizure from a 103 fever, and I lie
And tell him school is wonderful
And I'm making so many friends
That don't get into trouble,
And only welcome messages are sent.

“Do well enough,
You'll get there too,
And when you get that degree,
I'll be right there right beside you.”
It's the same thing Pops told me
When I finally gave up on street dreams
That only end in eternal sleep
For red stitched bandana seams.
And he's looking up to me
The same way I looked up as a child
To the water tower watching over us,
Collar-blue and not defiled
By the neighborhood's poisons,
Too high up from the weeds
But still close enough to keep an eye
On the next generation's seeds.
But as bad as I want his mind cultivated,
Do I say
That the road to success is one
They want us far away from, and to stay
Away from Gettysburg where they push
A Mexican off a fraternity porch
And call him a spic, then surround
A black man with the same approach
As White hoods when they hung
“Strange Fruit” for Crows to pick?
And they ask how we end up in the hood
And never leave that shit.
Do I tell him that preppy boys
In pastel colors, skittle-pack-looking,
Thinking they’re tougher than Mr. T
Sit around a table with schemes a-cooking
To run him out without being open
Are gonna follow him around every corner?
Or white girls in yoga pants and North Faces
Will see his skin and leave him a loner?
So what do I tell him, when I know
No matter where the wind drops him,
He could be one of those
100 brown boys in 100 brown coffins.