

Antonio Lopez

County Be My Name

Por la señal de la santa cruz mountains,
lies a tomb with my own name.

Antonio López. February 5, 1938.
There's a happy ending to all this.

Else, there's no point in being here.
This here that hulled your parents

into a country of a county taken
for gold & granite, once Ohlone,

Spanish, Mexican, American. No wonder
your name bounces off the walls

of every hyphen, the taste of blood
in sea salt where surfers chase their death

wish. The Devil's Trail, the deadly waves
of zips. What man-made bluffs, the U.S.

101, this long stretch of wild wild westside
once Whiskey Gulch, the uphill battle

of our kind and kin. *All in*, as heels of palms
shoveled the last moms & pops. 83. In all. Aw,

what a trip. For the passage of time to be branded
The Four Seasons of Silicon Valley. Breath-taking,

isn't it? And yet, here we is. I think about this a lot:
What if I was born in Mex? If father never crossed?

If a Republican president never signed the amnesty into law?
I would've never learned to sing the pledge of allegiance

at kindergarten. Would've never had Slocum sign my birth

certificate, would've never been a resident, a son of EPA.

What a strange act. For papers to ask a newborn,
do you wish to run? As if there exists a divine rite reason

for the stroke of citizenship. As if the once upon a bloodline,
a ship wasn't granted safe passage. A guard didn't doze off.

A policeman didn't rubber stamp the face of your face
from Manilla or Michoacán or Louisiana or a lil' place

in Polynesia called Samoa. We all from the shores
of somewhere. We all come from a tradition

where you learn to grow up fast giving speeches
to the dead, and not a day goes by I don't see Mama

Dee again, First United Methodist, her body as light
as a proclamation. Look, truth is, no politician

is born to do this. You learn to lead the ship
amidst an ocean of Pacific Islanders.

Look, whatever side of the isle you hail
mary, we all just want a woman who look

like our moms to whisper, *You're gonna be
okay without me, mi'jo.* To be loved enough

that someone drove halfway around the edges
of this earth for you, westbound, down 92,

to attend a six-hour study session in the City
of Half Moon Bay, wade through the midnight

of slides, Q&A, and *each speaker will have 60 seconds
to convince me of their humanity,* to convince 3 of 5,

Yes on 555 Kelly. Yes on 555 Kelly. O Mercy, Mercy
Housing, may we live in a country where the people

who pick our food have a roof over their bullets.
 May they never have to wake Marciano Martinez

Again. May our children never walk through rows
 of ICE. May our children never fear the color green

or red, or any of those that stalked the gangly fields
 of my 8th grade. May all living things in SMC

have free enjoyment of their liberty
 and Wi-Fi. From the elfin butterfly

of San Bruno, from the man who every dawn,
 dresses as a crow to hawk Fiesta Auto Insurance

down Middlefield Rd, hágase tu comercial
 así en la tierra como en North Fair Oaks.

And give us this day our Daly City,
 those foghorns in the distance

guiding these ships home.
 From the roar of planes in Millbrae,

to the sea urchin of Moss Beach,
 from the weathered pews of 2A

where I saw Fabian sentenced to life
 with the possibility of a poem at 18.

From superior courts where we stand
 the throw of a book or key away,

from having to open your back
 -pack before entering class.

From abuelos and nunos
 who first whispered, *north*,

from these groaning bones
 of South San Francisco,

Old Towns of factories,
meatpacking plants, giant blocks

of Lucerne cheese as a kid,
the frozen cans of concentrate.

From the check in Mom's hands,
as she marched up the WIC Office,

from Veterans Blvd, the Redwood City
branch of Kaiser Permanente.

From these cold white tiles, she sang
the national anthem of my ID card.

From the quiet chorus of clerks
through three-inch glass,

Do you have a pen, ma'm,
to the one I wield cuz of her

sleepless pats. In the name
of the father of my father,

the son, the one behind me
as I speak, I, López, Antonio

De Jesús, do so accept this sacred
and ancestral oath, to be a poet

laureate of San Mateo County.