

# Riverside Avenue

Cole W. Williams

and 9<sup>th</sup> forms an X, not a cross, we rented a home on the  
frontage road shadowed by towering  
highway walls hearing traffic pains and blows where at  
times big rigs broke jake brakes like  
shots fired, like automatics with waning motivation as sirens  
parted the sea – another day of  
delivering. We watched from the roof, from peeling shingles,  
and the sizzling heat, we smelled  
hashbrowns from Perkins, this was our corner for a hot  
minute –  
a corner existing long before Perkins and Zipps Liquors with  
the happy pack of Old Style, or  
Colt 45 Double-Deuce, we drank Schlitz in the shower, Old  
English 800, my my, malt liquor,  
kissing my fingers to Snoop Dogg's cardboard cutout,  
newsprint'ed fingers from the City Pages  
and loose change delivered at the door –  
what used to be a route for indigenous travelers: *Riverside*:  
star path, river guide, and when they  
said the Perkins would close for good, how an elder lamented  
for this refuge of light and heat, for  
the star path was still alive, through heat waves, all the stop  
lights, light pollution, can you see it  
now, how much worth was in each one-dollar drink with  
seven cent tax and a clean bathroom –  
I walked Riverside every day toward Fairview and  
Children's, toward campers seeking  
shade and stopped at the rehab center where compression  
socks dangled on display, O<sub>2</sub>  
tanks for cystic fibrosis kids I would ask to cough harder,  
back then I thought I could save  
someone – in front of the glass window I dreamt of all that  
saving – until I shifted focus and saw