

TAKE HEART

A Conversation in Poetry

*Edited & Introduced by Wesley McNair,
Maine Poet Laureate*

Bethel's Richard Blanco, who read his poetry at President Obama's second inauguration last January, will appear at the Strand Theatre in Rockland on July 17. In today's column he offers a love poem.

Thicker Than Country

by Richard Blanco

A Cuban like me living in Maine? Well, what the hell, Mark loves his native snow and I don't mind it, really. I love icicles, even though I still decorate the house with seashells and starfish. Sometimes I want to raise chickens and pigs, wonder if I could grow even a small mango tree in my three-season porch. But mostly, I'm happy with hemlocks and birches towering over the house, their shadows like sundials, the cool breeze blowing even in the summer. Sometimes I miss the melody of Spanish, a little, and I play Celia Cruz, dance alone in the basement. Sometimes I miss the taste of white rice with picadillo—so I cook, but it's never as good as my mother's. I don't miss her or the smell of her Cuban bread as much as I should. Most days I wonder why, but when Mark comes home like an astronaut dressed in his ski clothes, or I spy him planting petunias in the spring, his face smudged with this earth, or barbecuing in the summer when he asks me if I want a hamberg or a cheezberg as he calls them—still making me laugh after twelve years—I understand why the mountains here are enough, white with snow or green with palms, mountains are mountains, but love is thicker than any country.

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