

## A Poem for Manteca

I wonder who first loved this land  
Manteca

Research tells me it was the Miwok and  
The Yokuts  
Who are not long gone

I know

I make seed bead crafts with them in Stockton  
We make medicine bags and  
Break bread

And it is an honor.

I want to know more but I'm  
Unsure of how to tell them  
'Thank you'  
And  
'I'm sorry'

And as an appointed  
Poet,  
One who speaks words into art  
One who sees things as they should be  
I do not take this lightly to share my  
Words with you today about  
this land that  
I love

And I'm not here to shame but  
To paint  
A picture for you  
Of What I see

Let me tell you what I love about this city  
Its Country roads full of mystery and life  
Fruit stands and farm hands  
I love the old buildings that still brand  
downtown

I often daydream about what this historical area looked like  
Long before  
Cowell  
And the Cows

And honestly,  
I love the cows, too

I've driven up and down this state and see what cows endure  
For us  
Without a second thought  
From us But

I digress

What I love most  
About this city  
Is winding down Lathrop road on the northeast outskirts  
Seeing what special  
Friends the farmers have kept

Rows on Rows of  
Orchard Trees  
Cherry Blossoms  
Warm nights  
With a mid Summer Breeze

What I love about my city  
Is the sunsets and the skyline  
Manteca  
Like Butter  
Melts into the night  
Like a masterpiece  
A work of art the Universe  
And galaxies  
Spilled onto the earth  
For me

Look off into the distance and  
We don't see towering buildings layered with lights or slow rocking  
Beaches at midnight

Its  
The Valley  
Trains sing us lullabies  
The night bring waves of coyote cries

Driving up Union road at just the right time from  
French Camp  
You can see we are the pinnacle of the  
San Joaquin  
From the dawn of creation's devil-peaks Tuysktak to the west  
And our beloved Awhanee to the east

Center Stage  
Manteca  
Misnamed

Some times  
I've mistaken this place  
For paradise

Its loveliness,  
though some times hard to see  
Is not wasted on me  
For These eyes  
Are distracted daily by

The layered clouds that never say goodbye  
The purple pink skies of June and July

They say you can tell  
A lot about a city by  
The way its people love the land

Lets love our land, Manteca!

Take a walk with me through Manteca streets  
You will see what is working  
And where there are needs  
Together  
Together is better than to  
Reject thy brother

Because he is unhoused  
Because she is depressed  
Because they are  
just different.

Together, with love  
Let Manteca rise above  
The microaggressions and old mindsets  
That divide us.

Let love and knowledge liberate us  
To use care  
To be gentle  
To self-reflect  
To accept

This is a call to community

For unity

Someone once said  
In art  
On a wall

Let us rise above the differences that divide us  
Manteca  
Will you answer the call?