A man sitting next to me
Smells like grass and cigarettes
He’s a small man but
His hands are so big and worn out
Like the machinery that they treat him as
Rusty, but working to the point of malfunction
Just like the relationship between me and my father
Which is exactly what the man on the 2 train looks like
A little Mexican man with dark hair and baggy eyes
Torn jeans and dirty work boots just like my father
With a black Jansport book-bag
That smells like the company that exploits him
Like grass and cigarettes
Or like the fish market, where my father knows is the death of him
He made a vow to his children that he cannot live for
Himself because he is too old to dream, too Mexican to be citizen
And far too stubborn to give me and two other siblings anything but love
Just like the man on the 2 train
Who probably has children to feed, where he works
Minimum wage jobs to make limited food on the table
Just like my father, far too old for the physical work he’s given
But too motivated to stop, hoping that his children
Will learn the vocabulary he doesn’t know, the language he rarely spoke
Just like the man on the 2 train, with the grey mustache and the foreign name
Who was falling asleep next to me on the 2 train
And he nods off and drifts away, to the place where his parents once lived
And where he once called home...
“Next stop is 72nd street”
Only to wake up and realize
That he’ll never be young and even if he were he would not be back in Puebla
He’d work his way only to end up in the same place he’s in today
Just like my father
And I wonder how he doesn’t go insane
Cause I can’t travel without the iPod my father worked for
Because I wouldn’t dare leave myself with my own thoughts
Like the man with the baggy eyes, ripped jeans and dirty work boots
Like the man on the 2 train
I cry because I look into his blank eyes and don’t know what he’s thinking
Just like my father, who looks like the cracks on my palms
So close and always loving but so small and crooked across my skin
so unnoticed. Just like the man on the 2 train.