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POEM IN ENGLISH

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THE FIRST DAY

When I was five I was put on a bus
and sent to Catholic school
not unlike my mother who was five
when she was put on a train
and sent to residential school,
both feeling that gut feeling
that this was not going to be
a place we would like.

My parents told

my older sister

to watch over me

but she had long ago

grown to not like me,

let alone protect me.

As we waited to go in

that first morning

a group of boys decided

they did not like my brown skin

The biggest of them came at me

but I was prepared

as I had already been beaten up

when I was four, again

because of the colour of my skin.

So the big kid and I scrapped

and soon the sisters were on us.

We were sent down the hall

as all the other kids

and their glorious uniforms

went down into the classrooms

to begin their first day.

The big kid and I were told

to stand against a brick wall

and the main Sister Superior

of all the sisters told us

if we wished to punch,

then punch the wall.

So we did.

As my five-year-old fists
smashed against the wall
and soon blood formed on
my knuckles and the Superior
smiled and praised the Lord.
She told us that was enough
and I kept swinging
as the big boy cried
and said he was sorry. But I wasn't.
The sister again told me to stop
and I threw one more punch
at the wall for her and one more
for Christ who the whole time
stared down from his cross.
And that was the first day
of my time with the Lord.