***If I Grow Up*** by Todd Strasser

DeShawn lives in the Frederick Douglass Projects which are ruled by a gang called the Douglass Disciples. We first meet DeShawn when he is 12 years old, living in a world where kids his age use the phrase “If I grow up” in everyday conversation, where frequently evenings are interrupted with shootings and having to lie on the floor hoping you don’t get shot. Even women and small children are no exception to the violence from rival gangs. Modern conveniences like, microwaves, dishwashers, cable TV, washing machines and dryers don’t exist for kids like him. He starts to grow up fast when he finds out his girlfriend is pregnant and that his grandmother can no longer support their growing family. He has to find some way to make money. DeShawn is smart and sees college as the way out of his situation. He does not want to join the Disciples gang but it’s the only way he knows that he can make the money he needs to support those who are depending on him. But if he gets in, will he ever be able to get out?

*~ Angela Germany’s Booktalk*