



Poetry Like Bread

Martin Espada, Mart'n Espada

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Poetry Like Bread contains poems by nearly forty poets published by the Curbstone Press during the last twenty years. These poets are probably unlike any you have studied. Their engagement with everyday political and economic realities is as direct as a newspaper, their language as familiar as conversation. Their motto, taken from Roque Dalton for the title of the collection, is that "poetry, like bread, is for everyone."

These poems were not written to be studied. They were meant to be read. Or better yet, heard. Whole or in part. Alone or among friends and strangers. Reading and hearing them, you must respond and react. Some may inspire you, knock the wind out of you--make you indignant, sad, joyous, ashamed. Whether you drop this book, seek out others, join a social action group, write letters to your elected representatives, or write poems of your own, your reaction to the poems will be as political as the poems themselves.

Some of the subjects of these poems may be unfamiliar to you, or very familiar to you. Many relate stories from war-torn Central and South America, where U. S. policy has had a huge impact on people's lives. The rest are the voices of the voiceless here in the U.S: Latinos and African Americans, Vietnam veterans and Vietnamese, prison inmates, blue collar workers, migrant workers, women, the homeless. It's the poet's job to open up and validate these worlds to us. Our job, once roused, is to learn. To learn and to act.

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