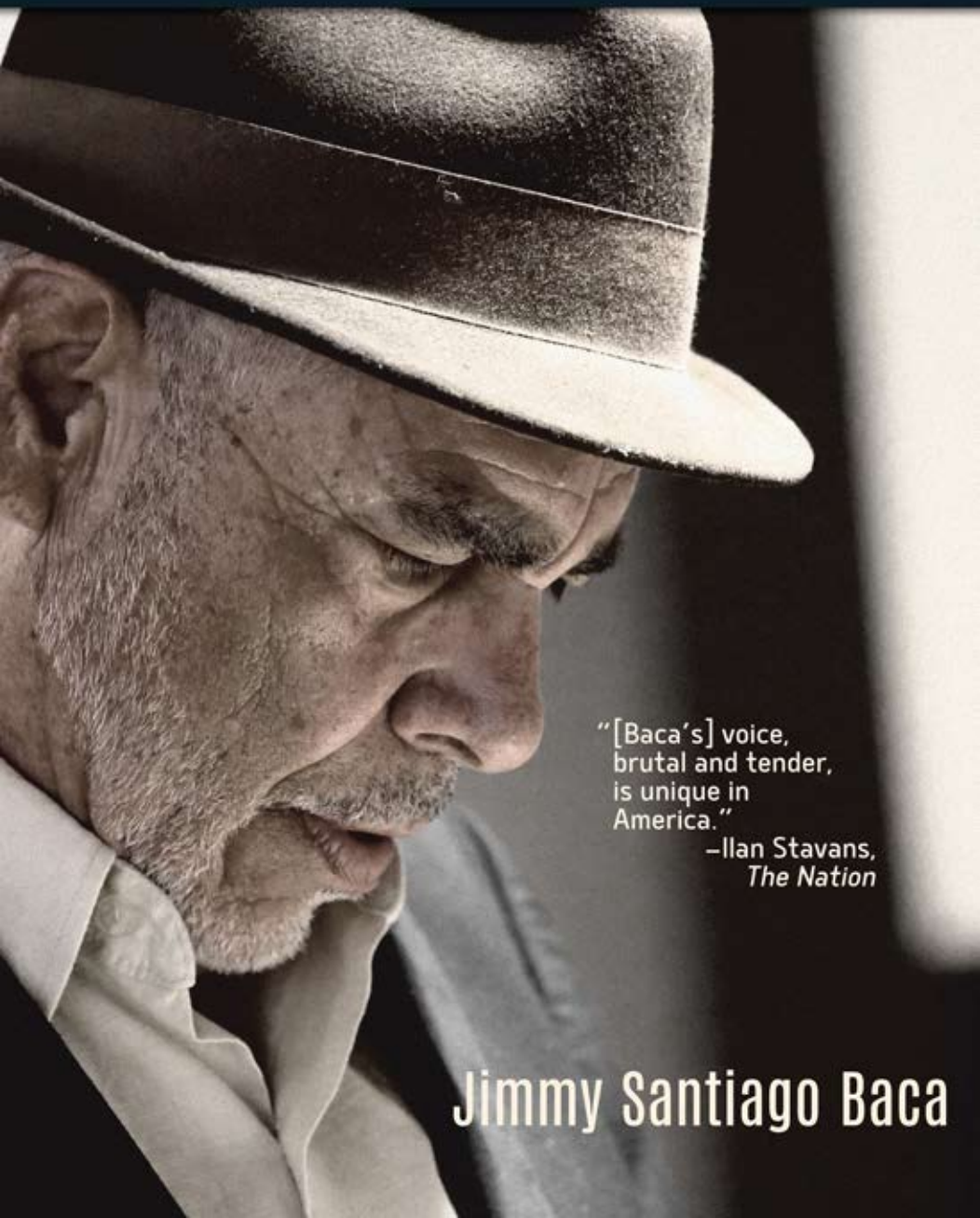


no enemies

poems



"[Baca's] voice,
brutal and tender,
is unique in
America."

—Ilan Stavans,
The Nation

Jimmy Santiago Baca

Praise for the Work of Jimmy Santiago Baca

“Stands as proof there is always hope in even the most desperate lives.”

—*Fort Worth Morning Star-Telegram* on *A Place to Stand*

“This slim, salient volume will open readers’ eyes wide to the true human stories behind blaring headlines about immigration policies and debates.”

—*Booklist*, starred review, on *When I Walk through That Door, I Am: An Immigrant Mother’s Quest*

“Incredibly emotive and beautifully written. A must read.”

—*Bustle* on *When I Walk through That Door, I Am*

“Jimmy Baca’s new book brilliantly reimagines the epic poem—and reshapes the epic hero as a young immigrant woman struggling to escape violence and find the child that has been torn away from her. A work that speaks strikingly and passionately of our times.”

—Richard Blanco on *When I Walk Through That Door, I Am*

“[Baca’s] voice, brutal and tender, is unique in America.”

—Ilan Stavans, *The Nation*

“What makes [Baca’s poetry] a success is its honesty, a brutal honesty, as well as his original imagery and the passion of his writing.”

—Gary Soto, *The San Francisco Chronicle*

“To read Jimmy Santiago Baca’s poetry is to tramp across the uneven terrain of human experience, sometimes lulled by the everydayness of work or relationships, and then dazzled by a flood of emotion or vibrant observation.”

—*Western American Literature*

“[With *A Glass of Water*] Baca manages to put a face on desperation. He decries the exploitation of migrant farm workers in the United States . . . [and] derogates not only an exploitive American economic system, but also Mexican drug lords driving the poor off their land, who become homeless or victims of violence. . . . [But] a field worker’s life isn’t all toil and gloom as reflected in the lives of the characters. There’s also passion, joy, love of family, adventure, love, longing, and accomplishment. The imagery is striking, the prose lyrical.”

—*The Albuquerque Journal*

“[A] blistering novel . . . The sheer passion that drives Baca’s [work] is undeniable.”

—*Publishers Weekly* on *A Glass of Water*

Baca “writes with unconcealed passion” and “manifests both an intense lyricism and that transformative vision which perceives the mythical and archetypal significance of life events.”

—Denise Levertov

no enemies

poems

Jimmy Santiago Baca



Arte Público Press
Houston, Texas

No Enemies is made possible through a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. We are thankful for its support.

Recovering the past, creating the future

Arte Público Press
University of Houston
4902 Gulf Fwy, Bldg 19, Rm 100
Houston, Texas 77204-2004

Cover design by Mora Desjgn
Cover photo by Lonnie J. Anderson

Names: Baca, Jimmy Santiago, 1952- author.

Title: No enemies : poems / Jimmy Santiago Baca.

Description: Houston, Texas : Arte Publico Press, [2021] | Summary: "Acclaimed poet Jimmy Santiago Baca knows something is wrong with contemporary society. He's afraid "that the whole network / that connects us / and society together / is going to collapse / that our lives / will be dependent on tiny / little blue wires / that can't shake my hand / or share my joy, / that won't challenge the police / to stop beating a brown man / or can't do even something as small / and gentle as smile." In this collection of new poems, Baca expresses his sense of responsibility to use his gift for the greater good. "If not me, then who / speaks to money, power, privilege / if not / an ordinary man / then who?" He chastises those who use their connections to benefit themselves at the expense of the impoverished, imprisoned and undocumented. Frequently, he takes aim at poets and politicians who put their lucrative positions ahead of their constituents: "Governor, if you choose a career / where you have to ignore the truth / and pillage the unfortunate, at least / outlaw automatic weapons." While many of these poems are stinging rebukes against the wealthy and powerful and their disregard for children living in poverty and the environment, others are beautiful odes to his indigenous roots. There are buffalo with their gentle hearts, sacred places where he prays to his ancestors and the plants growing on steep mountainsides that give "me courage to keep clinging to hope and to learn / life's most important lesson / practice how to lean in life so as not to fall." Baca writes urgently about the most important themes of our generation, including education, justice, the environment and even the coronavirus. Ironically, he notes, "the enemy didn't come at us crossing borders, / swinging machetes and machine guns." No, nature herself has come to clean house, to give "Mother Earth a reprieve from our greed."
—Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2021028086 (print) | LCCN 2021028087 (ebook) |

ISBN 9781558859272 (trade paperback ; alk. paper) |

ISBN 9781518506710 (epub) | ISBN 9781518506727 (kindle edition) |

ISBN 9781518506734 (pdf)

Subjects: LCGFT: Poetry.

Classification: LCC PS3552.A254 N6 2021 (print) | LCC PS3552.A254 (ebook) |

DDC 811/.54—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021028086>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021028087>

∞ The paper used in this publication meets the requirements of the American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

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Printed in the United States of America

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Acknowledgements

As always, none of these poems would be possible if not for the love from so many people I believe in who work in our communities and barrios for justice, education, health care. Seeing you do the real work, teachers, poets/writers, painters, *santeros*, dancers, so many everyday people, inspires me. And of course, my *familia*, my beautiful kids Tones, Gabe, Esai and Lucía, without you, nothing is possible. Last but most pivotal, my beautiful wife Stacy.

NO ENEMIES

By Charles Mackay
(English Chartist poet, 1814-1889)

*YOU have no enemies, you say?
Alas! my friend, the boast is poor.
He who has mingled in the fray
of duty that the brave endure,
must have made foes. If you have none,
small is the work that you have done.
You've hit no traitor on the hip.
You've dashed no cup from perjured lip.
You've never turned the wrong to right.
You've been a coward in the fight.*

POLITICS





History books praise them, colonial poets
claim them bravest, evangelicals
label them saviors and redeemers
but I beg to differ with Whitman and President Polk
and others who mythologize wagon-train white settlers
as heroes. Or put another way:
How about you have them
rape your mother and daughter
sell your son into slavery
steal your land
burn your house
lynch your father, then
call them heroes.
Write about them as romantic cowboys in western novels
lionize them in films *How the West Was Won*.
Trapper, military genius, explorers
Missouri & Ohio pioneers, western heroes
white historical figures your kids
can emulate and look up to:
the Bents, Fremonts, Carsons, Kearny's . . .

How about that?



Days of broken glass and bloody needles
junkies throw in parks and yards
days when poets are picketed at readings
and political discourse is settled
with pipe bombs and shootings
days of burning crosses by white nationalists
urged and commended by a president
encouraging violence and rancor and division,
these are the days
when no child can find a leader to admire.

Days of broken glass and bloody needles
dogs shred their paws and barefoot children
contract AIDS
days of broken glass and bloody needles
when speech and words have become useless
and mayors use educational resources to support
guns and clubs and police forces
and militarized goon squads,
these are days
when the singers have had their tongues cut out
and clergy sodomize trusting children.

Days of broken glass and bloody needles
when shahs, monarchs, dictators
bomb cities of women and children
when right-wing extremists claim
all who are not White
should be imprisoned, shot, turned away
starved and maligned.

These are days of broken glass and bloody needles
when even our finest writers and celebrity TV hosts
prey on women, days of broken glass and bloody needles
broken glass and bloody needles
broken glass and bloody needles. . . .