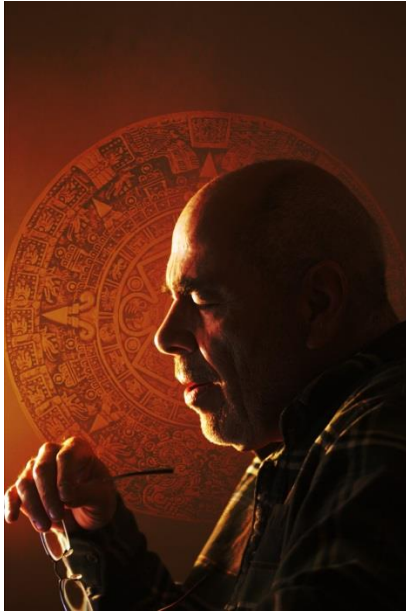


Jimmy Santiago Baca Miguel



Miguel seems to be getting a kick out of driving fast along the Hudson River. Night. We're packed in tight, Lucky, Piñero, a couple of others. I'm blitzed. Someone says "he aims for Jewish stockbrokers as they step off the curb, his therapy" someone else laughs. We're in a massive 70's car, long as a block, the kind of car gangsters leave behind during a bombing, or the kind Chicano kids make their playhouse in alleys, sitting on top of the hood getting their first piece of ass, their first joint. The car is a statement like everything else in Miguel's life. At the bar of innumerable cool little boutique drinking holes, rounded shoulders, perfectly round shaped head, that crazy smile when he turned to look sideways over his shoulder and his deep hog voice, "Ya," as if grunted from a deep pot of stew. Then the glimmer in his eyes, those lips smiling, that cheeky indulgent grin that flushed his expression like a matinee idol had practiced it a thousand times, perfectly modeled, timing, loose, skin tone, every single aspect of his being

embodied in that look that said, Fuck You! In the kindest most loving manner, him walking down the street with a bulging crotch that should have been illegal. I mean, the man was visited at his birth by horse gods or something. But he'd purr about a beautiful boy sitting on the stoops across the street and say something about how he'd fuck that shit up, or he'd see a golden blond hair boy walking past us and growl with an appetite to kiss that ass and sup from the king's banquet table the luscious loins of that blue eyed caviar.

I brought him several times to tour New Mexico where his octave voice trembled the rafters of theaters in Santa F and woke the crones from their pharmaceutical sleep, gorgeous voice like colorful roses at dawn, opening petal on petal with each noun, verb, fluttering with hummingbirds, his poems as etched and weighted as the turquoise bracelets he bought at Spanish market, or in Taos at Mabel Dodge Lujan house, always ebullient with his opinion, compassionate, endearing, irreverent, in Burque with the vatos cruising high as kites reaching the outer ozone, sparkingly high, his laughter cracking porcelain dishes a mile away, barrel chested, husky throated, inquisitive as a cat, kissing cheeks of all he met, a master satirist, keen minded Shakespearean scholar, reveling in the sugar of life, we, he and the gang of poets from Loisada, kicking back and speeding along highways from Rezs to barrios, universities to community centers, fearlessly risking political correctness, smashing it on the cement sidewalk his heels, to embrace unobstructed engagement with life's primordial downpour of stimulation, and like a character in one of O'Neill's plays, a renaissance Brando, at 4 am in the middle of Avenue A, there he goes, walking somewhere, talking to the literary ghosts of Ginsberg or Dylan or Burroughs that inhabit NYC's quiet hours, a voice would come from a tenement window, Miguel, Miguel! and he would turn, smile at the night sky, huff and grunt his satisfaction when he was and who he was....

Born in 1952 in Santa Fe of Chicano and Apache descent, **Jimmy Santiago Baca's** semi autobiographical novel in verse, *Martin and Meditations on the South Valley* (1987), received the 1988 Before Columbus Foundation's American Book Award in 1989. In addition to over a dozen books of poetry, he has published memoirs, essays, stories, and a screenplay, *Bound by Honor* (1993), which was made into a feature-length film directed by Taylor Hackford. Baca's other poetry titles include *Healing Earthquakes* (2001), *C-Train & 13 Mexicans* (2002), *Winter Poems Along the Rio Grande* (2004), and *Spring Poems Along the Rio Grande* (2007). In addition to the American Book Award, Baca has received a Pushcart Prize and the Hispanic Heritage Award for Literature. His memoir, *A Place to Stand* (2001), garnered the International Prize.