

by Jimmy Santiago Baca

O Yes? Do they come on horses

with rifles, and say,

Ese gringo, gimmee your job?

And do you, gringo, take off your ring,

drop your wallet into a blanket

spread over the ground, and walk away?

I hear Mexicans are taking your jobs away.

Do they sneak into town at night,

and as you're walking home with a whore,

do they mug you, a knife at your throat,

saying, I want your job?

Even on TV, an asthmatic leader

crawls turtle heavy, leaning on an assistant,

and from a nest of wrinkles on his face,

a tongue paddles through flashing waves

of lightbulbs, of cameramen, rasping

"They're taking our jobs away."

Well, I've gone about trying to find them,

asking just where the hell are these fighters.

The rifles I hear sound in the night

are white farmers shooting blacks and browns

whose ribs I see jutting out

and starving children,

I see the poor marching for a little work
I see small white farmers selling out
to clean-suited farmers living in New York,
who've never been on a farm,
don't know the look of a hoof or a the smell
of a woman's body bending all day long in fields.
I see this, and I hear only a few people
got all the money in this world, the rest
count their pennies to buy bread and butter.
Below that cool green sea of money,
millions and millions of people fight to live,
search for pearls in the darkest depths
of their dreams, hold their breath for years
trying to cross poverty to just having something.
The children are dead already. We are killing them.
that is what America should be saying;
on TV, in the streets, in offices, should be saying,
"We aren't giving the children a chance to live."
Mexicans are taking our jobs, they say instead.
What they really say is let them die,
and the children too.