

Martín Espada

PAROLE HEARING
--for Ben

After three hours of interrogation by the parole board,
and the prisoner repeating *I did not do this thing*,
his brown hands were trembling, and the trembling
spilled his plastic cup at the table
where the prisoner sat, and his body stiffened
as the water oozed across the table to the edge,
inches from the prisoner's lap and his blue suit,
and the seven faces of the parole board
watched the puddle creeping closer,
and their silence was the silence of water
half a mile down, till one of them asked
You need something to wipe that up?
as if to say *You will die in prison*,
and the prisoner, his breath returned,
raised his chin and answered Yes,
as if to say *I did not do this thing*.

Martín Espada
8/11/00

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Martín Espada was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1957. His fifth book of poetry, *Imagine the Angels of Bread* (W. W. Norton, 1996), won an American Book Award and was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. Another volume, *Rebellion Is the Circle of a Lover's Hands* (Curbstone, 1990), won both the PEN/Revson Fellowship and the Paterson Poetry Prize. His poems have appeared in *The New York Times Book Review*, *Harper's*, *The Nation*, *The Pushcart Prize XXIII*, and *The Best American Poetry*. He has published a collection of essays, *Zapata's Disciple* (South End Press, 1998), which received an Independent Publisher Book Award, and is also the editor of *El Coro: A Chorus of Latino and Latina Poetry* (University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), recipient of a Myers Outstanding Book Award. A former tenant lawyer, Espada is currently a professor in the Department of English at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.