

# Town of Frijoles

By Ray Gonzalez

*For Juan Felipe Herrera*

In the town of frijoles,  
men eat their meals without  
washing their hands, wanting  
to bless their mothers' food  
with soil from the fields.

In the town of frijoles,  
boys beat on hollow pots,  
the last wiping of their sides  
with a piece of tortilla as  
holy a moment as taking  
the wafer in church.

In the town of frijoles,  
women undress to keep  
their babies warm, stories  
whispered into bald heads  
revealed as poems decades  
later, when it is early.

In the town of frijoles,  
old men cry for their  
fathers and mothers,  
tombstone ranches dotting  
the night moon where  
the pinto aromas extend  
beyond the bowl of the sun.

Notes:

The epigraph of this poem was originally omitted in the changeover to the new website. Because of this, reciting the epigraph is optional for the 2019-2020 Poetry Out Loud season.

Source: *Poetry* (March 2019)



Ray Gonzalez is the author of nine books of poetry, served as Poetry Editor of The Bloomsbury Review for twenty-five years, and founded LUNA, a poetry journal, in 1998. He received a 2004 Lifetime Achievement Award in Literature from the Border Regional Library Association. He is Full Professor in the MFA Creative Writing Program at The University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. He has served as Poetry Editor of The Bloomsbury Review for twenty-five years and founded LUNA, a poetry journal, in 1998. He received a 2004 Lifetime Achievement Award in Literature from the Border Regional Library Association. He is Full Professor in the MFA Creative Writing Program at The University of Minnesota in Minneapolis.

[See More By This Poet](#)