



# The Meaning of the Shovel

*Martin Espada*

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*Martin Espada*

## **The Meaning of the Shovel** Martin Espada

Martin Espada has worked as a bouncer, a primate caretaker, a door-to-door encyclopedia salesman, a gas station attendant and a tenant lawyer. As a poet, he acts as an advocate for the Latino community in the United States, particularly the immigrant working class, from farm workers sprayed with pesticides in the field to the kitchen staff who died in a restaurant at the top of the World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001. *The Meaning of the Shovel* brings together, for the first time, all of Espada's poems about work, including several previously unpublished poems. It is a book about the emotional and often invisible landscape of labour, about 'hard-handed men', 'the rude Mechanicals: the tailor, the weaver, the tinker, the bellows-mender.' The title poem, based on the poet's experience of digging latrines in Nicaragua, embraces a vision of revolutionary change.

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