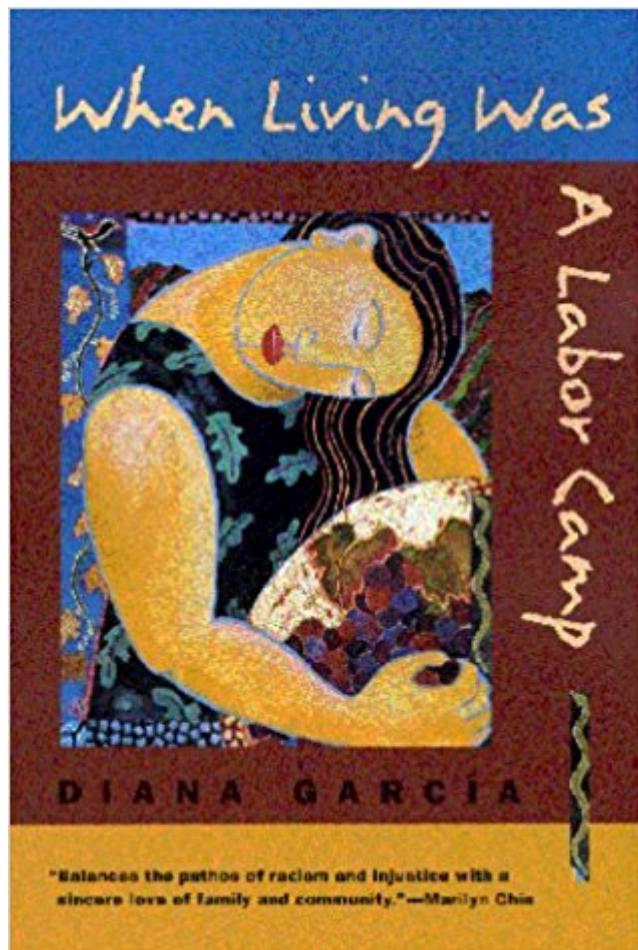


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When Living Was A Labor Camp (Camino Del Sol)



Synopsis

"I write what I eat and smell," says Diana García, and her words are a bountiful harvest. Her poems color the page with the vibrancy and sweetness of figs, the freshness of tortillas, and the sensuality of language. In this, García's first collection of poems, she takes a bittersweet look back at the migrant labor camps of California and offers a tribute to the people who toiled there. Writing from the heart of California's San Joaquin Valley, she catapults the reader into the lives of the campesinos with their daily joys and sorrows. Bold, political, and familial, García's poems gift the reader with a sense of earth, struggle, and pride—each line filled with the sounds of agrarian music, from mariachi melodies to repatriation revolts. Embodied with such spirit, her poems rise with the convictions of power and equality.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This debut book of poems is a wonder, and was written by someone whose wise voice should have been heard a long time before now. Diana Garcia is the daughter of Mexican migrant workers in California's San Joaquin Valley, the granddaughter of a curandera, the mother of a son who migrates on his own to Kansas, and the wife of a man who toasts her with kind glances. And there are other close relations, a nest within which Garcia illuminates difficulty and endurance, the extraordinary in the everyday, and the persistence of love. The book is divided into several sections, among them memoroes of living in labor camps, evocative poems in several voices honoring the

lives of apparently ordinary women, startling poems on the matter of racism, and warm poems about her relations to intimates. The book involves a number of poetic styles, and this variety hones the reader's attention to this one poet who writes what she knows into the profound.

This book, by Diana Garcia (an English professor at California State University Monterey Bay), which won the 2001 American Book Award for poetry, is among a long list of books that recently were banned from the classrooms in the Tucson Unified High School District. Also on that list are "The House on Mango Street," by Sandra Cisneros; Shakespeare's play, "The Tempest"; and at least one work by Henry David Thoreau. Students who want access to these books must request them from the school library but no discussion of the books is allowed in class. One of the many ironies about this disgusting censorship is the fact that Prof. Garcia's book, now in its sixth printing, is published by the University of Arizona Press, located in Tucson.

Just a few words: Diana Garcia's collection is a rare mix of literary power, hard-won truths, wimin's realities and soulful flames come burnin' out of the page into our consciousness. I haven't seen a book with these valencies since Lorna Dee Cervantes' break-through *Emplumada!* And she reminds us --without bombast -- about this earth, its workers, its campesino childhoods, hungers and shames and incandescent liberations. Diana Garcia has lived many lives, for many lives -- and now it is her life-lines we can hold, for a moment at least, as "birds of paradise/against a gold-lit world." Gracias, Diana.

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