

Louis Rodriguez
1954-

Luis J. Rodríguez was born in El Paso, Texas, although his parents lived in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. The family moved the Watts area of Los Angeles and later, East Los Angeles, where his family faced poverty and discrimination. In Ciudad Juarez, his father had been a high school principal, but in Los Angeles he worked in a dog food factory, a paint factory, in construction, selling pots and pans and Bibles, and finally, as a laboratory custodian. Luis's mother was a school secretary, but in L.A. worked cleaning homes and in the garment industry ("Luis J. Rodriguez). During the 1960s and 1970s, Luis was an active gang member and drug user in East Los Angeles, developing a long rap sheet ("Luis Rodriguez"). Rodríguez lost twenty-five of his friends to gang violence, drug overdoses, shootings, and suicide before he turned 19 (Poets).

Even though he was an active gang member, Rodriguez participated in various political activities, including the Chicano Movement, the East L.A. walkouts, and the 1970 Chicano Moratorium against the Vietnam War. He found a mentor who recognized Luis's capacity as a graffiti writer and community leader, and with this mentor's help, in 1972 Luis painted several murals in the San Gabriel Valley communities of Rosemead and South San Gabriel ("Luis J Rodriguez"). He also led student groups at both his high school and at California State University, Los Angeles, which he attended briefly.

His gang and political activities "came to an inevitable head when at the age of 18, a sentence imposed for a criminal conviction in a case where Luis tried to stop the police beating of a young Mexican woman, who was handcuffed and on the ground, was mitigated by letters of support from community members who saw his potential. Feeling a sense of indebtedness to those who had helped him, Luis decided to quit heroin and other drugs and the gang life" and became fully committed to social activism, including helping with various gang and urban peace efforts in the L.A. area ("Luis Rodriguez").

He began his journalism career while a night student at East Los Angeles College, and worked for several area publications. During this time he began facilitating writing workshops and talks in prisons and juvenile lockups. He moved to Chicago in 1985 to become the editor of *The People's Tribune*, a publication linked to the League of Revolutionaries for a New America. Luis became active in the Chicago poetry scene, the birthplace of the Poetry Slam, and founded Tia Chucha Press to publish his first book, *Poems Across the Pavement* ("Luis Rodriguez"). During this time, he continued to work as a freelance journalist while also leading workshops in prisons, shelters for homeless people, schools, and community centers (Poets).

In October 2011, he became a cofounder of the Network for Revolutionary Change in Chicago, dedicated to bringing together revolutionary leaders, thinkers, and activists from throughout the United States to plan, strategize, and organize social justice, equity, and peace through cooperation, imagination, and meaningful actions ("Luis Rodriguez"). Rodriguez has spent more than 30 years as a renowned gang intervention specialist while also conducting workshops, readings, and talks in prisons, juvenile facilities, homeless shelters, migrant camps, universities, public and private schools, and conferences (Poet).

In addition to social activism and service, Rodriguez has published several books of poetry, children's literature, a short story collection, a novel, and a nonfiction book on creating community in violent times. On October 9, 2014, Rodriguez was named the second Los Angeles Poet Laureate by Mayor Eric Garcetti.

"Luis J. Rodriguez." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web. 03 Jan. 2017.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luis_J._Rodriguez.

Poets.org.Academy of American Poets, n.d. Web. 03 Jan. 2017.

<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poet/luis-j-rodr%C3%ADguez>

Poems:

Red Screams

https://books.google.com/books?id=ccmwkIAH6gAC&pg=PT92&lpg=PT92&dq=red+screams+by+luis+rodriguez&source=bl&ots=SbAKEjkBSD&sig=0-F-EXRDSnEtErs6T_OakcrKprI&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiS0sCpiafRAhXlrFQKHZb6DFcQ6AEIHTAB#v=onepage&q=red%20screams%20by%20luis%20rodriguez&f=false

The Facts of Life

https://books.google.com/books?id=vZCEwOQ48rsC&pg=PT35&lpg=PT35&dq=Luis+Rodriguez+facts+of+life+lyrics&source=bl&ots=k_ElsnTsWE&sig=ilCJIKknBz9PI9d7L8u4vI0YIHU&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiN1qyqiqfRAhXLw1QKHRb9BvUQ6AEILjAD#v=onepage&q=Luis%20Rodriguez%20facts%20of%20life%20lyrics&f=false