

DE BURGOS, JULIA (1914–1953)

I wanted to be like men wanted me to be:
an attempt at life;
a game of hide and seek with my being.
But I was made of nows.

Yo misma fui mi ruta. Julia de Burgos. *Latinas in the United States: A Historical Encyclopedia.*

Raised in poverty, the oldest of thirteen siblings, Julia Constanza Burgos García showed little promise in her youth that she would become one of Puerto Rico's foremost revolutionary feminist poets. She was a dedicated student and received a scholarship to study at the University of Puerto Rico's Normal School. The period of the 1930s wrought devastation in Puerto Rico with natural disasters, political and social unrest. In 1936 she joined the Nationalist Party and soon thereafter electrified an audience with her speech, "La mujer ante el dolor de la patria" (Women Facing the Pain of the Nation), trying to rally women to the independence struggle. Her first three collections of poetry, *Poemas exactos a mi misma* (Exact Poems to Myself) (1937), *Poema en veinte surcos* (Poem in Twenty Furrows) (1938), and *Canción de la verdad sencilla* (Song of the Simple Truth) (1939), appeared under the pen name Julia de Burgos. In New York Julia de Burgos wrote a weekly column for the newspaper *Pueblos hispanos* (Hispanic Peoples). Complicated by health problems, de Burgos' turbulent, alcoholic life led eventually to her early death. Her poem "Farewell from Welfare Island," and a posthumously published collection, *El Mar y Tu* (The Sea and You) were written in New York.