

NORTE, MARISELA (1955–)

[Her] view of Los Angeles as a child: “a bad movie with a running commentary in English and Spanish. Writing has enabled me to speak when keeping silent was the only choice.”

Marisela Norte has been described in many ways: affectionately as “the Cultural Ambassador of East L.A.,” “the Poet Laureate of Boyle Heights,” and “the Muse on the Bus” by *Buzz* magazine. Norte grew up in East L.A. during the turmoil of the civil rights and Chicano Movement and became involved with performance art in ASCO and the Latino Writers Workshop. Her spoken-word disk *Norte/Word* (1991) received critical acclaim and captures the duality of daily life in Los Angeles. It highlights a “transnational world of women caught in the web of economic exploitation.” Writing extensively on the Number 18 bus to downtown Los Angeles, the vehicle became both office and window to the human struggle of life for Angelenos. When the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) selected Norte and photographer Willie García to develop a series of photos and essays, posted as placards in bus interiors, her writings were reproduced in more than 2,000 city buses. Her writings include the play, *Black Butterfly, Jaguar Girl, Piñata Woman and Other Superhero Girls like Me*. Norte serves as a mentor to young writers in L. A.