

*Huelga*

by Diana Garcia

September 24th, 1965  
 Delano California.  
 You remember this day.  
 How can you forget?

Iconic this photo,  
 outsize reproduction guiding us in.  
 The great strikes in Delano,  
 where it all began and you were there.

Look at you atop a truck,  
 sun in your eyes, you squint.

Sensible clothes,  
 sleeves pushed up passed your elbows,  
 your get to work look.  
 Comfy dark slacks,  
 nothing you'd wear to church,  
 nothing you'd wear turning trays.

You turned from side to side,  
 arms tired from holding the sign.  
 It looks heavy,  
 the word *huelga* feels heavy.

Think of what this word means  
 to all those who follow you out that day.

Think of the lives changed by this one word,  
 workers daring to claim their lives.  
 Daring to think their arms, backs, legs  
 should earn them  
 more than subsistence wages.  
 More than a quick meal midday,  
 more than those furtive trips  
 to the edge of the fields,  
 hunkered down against crying eyes.  
 More than dry eyes and dryer throats.

The heat rises,  
 pushes against your face,  
 singles you out atop that truck.

You must wonder  
 if even now  
 someone has you in their crosshairs.

You must wonder  
 what would happen to your children.

But you can't think about them,  
 because this *is* about your children.  
 This is about all the children,  
 about all these young workers,  
 ready to walk out,  
 ready to follow you,  
 ready not to grow old beneath another hot  
 sun.