



# Achy Obejas

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*It's just that sometimes other lives lived right alongside mine interrupt, barge in on my senses, and I no longer know if I really lived through an experience or just heard about it so many times, or so convincingly, that I believed it for myself--became the lens through which it was captured, retold and reshaped.*

— Memory Mambo

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## Quick Facts

- \* Born in 1956
- \* Cuban-American journalist, poet, and novelist
- \* Currently a writer at the *Chicago Tribune*

## Biography

Achy Obejas was born in 1956 in Havana, Cuba, a city that she left six years later when she came to the United States with her parents after the Cuban revolution. She grew up in Michigan City, Indiana, and moved to Chicago in 1979. At the age of thirty-nine, Obejas returned to the island of her birth “for a brief visit and was seduced by a million things” (Shapiro 4). The Cuba of her imagination and experience recur throughout her writings.

An accomplished journalist, Obejas worked briefly for the *Chicago Sun-Times* from 1980-81 and then for the *Chicago Reader*. She has also written for *The Windy City Times*, *The Advocate*, *High Performance*, and *The Village Voice*. Her coverage of the Chicago mayoral elections earned her the 1998 Peter Lisagor Award for political reporting. She currently is a cultural writer for the *Chicago Tribune*, where she has worked since 1991.

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# Achy Obejas

## Biography continued

Obejas poetry has appeared in a number of journals, including *Conditions*, *Revista Chicano-Rique*, and *The Beloit Poetry Journal*. In 1986, she received an NEA fellowship in poetry. Her short stories have also been widely published in journals and anthologies. Her novels include *We Came All the Way from Cuba So You Could Dress Like This?* (1994) and *Memory Mambo* (1996), both published by Cleis Press. *Memory Mambo* won a Lambda Award, and her third novel, *Days of Awe* (2001), also won the 2002 Lambda Award for Lesbian Fiction.

Although she has lived in the Midwestern United States since she was six, Obejas has always identified with Cuba. She says in an interview:

“I was born in Havana and that single event pretty much defined the rest of my life. In the U.S., I’m Cuban, Cuban-American, Latina by virtue of being Cuban, a Cuban journalist, a Cuban writer, somebody’s Cuban lover, a Cuban dyke, a Cuban girl on a bus, a Cuban exploring Sephardic roots, always and endlessly Cuba. I’m more Cuban here than I am in Cuba, by sheer contrast and repetition” (Shapiro 4).

As an activist and writer, Obejas continues to explore her Cuban identity and experience, earning her an important place in the literature of the United States.



# Achy Obejas

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