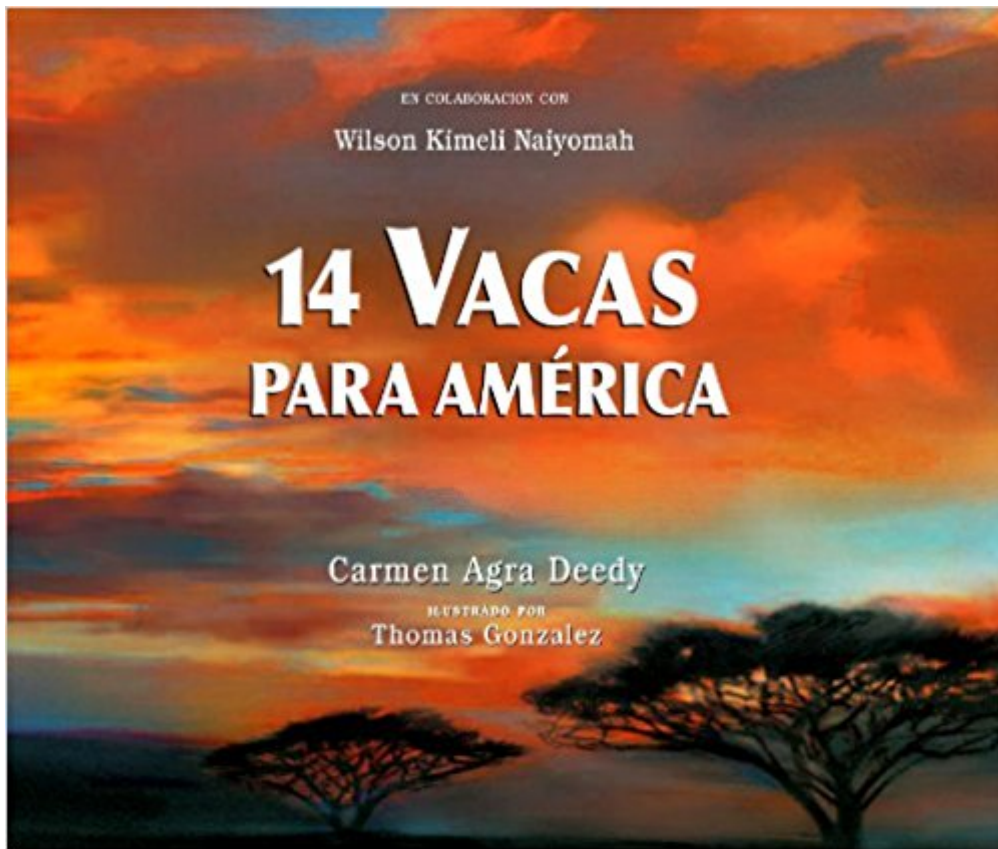




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# **14 Vacas Para America (Spanish Edition)**



## Synopsis

Es junio del 2002 y en una lejana aldea del oeste de Kenia tiene lugar una ceremonia poco común. Un diplomático norteamericano se encuentra rodeado de cientos de maasai que van a hacer un regalo a los hombres, las mujeres y los niños de Estados Unidos. Un regalo sorprendente e inesperado, un regalo extraordinario. ¿Cómo está allí para aceptarlo? Hace tan sólo nueve meses del ataque del 11 de septiembre y los corazones siguen destrozados. Cuando estos legendarios guerreros ofrecen su regalo a un pueblo doliente al otro lado del globo las lágrimas brotan por igual de ojos norteamericanos y maasai. Esta insólita ofrenda será noticia en las emisoras del mundo entero y muchos se sentirán profundamente conmovidos. Para los norteamericanos, este gesto espontáneo tendrá un significado aún más hondo. Para una nación desolada, el regalo de las catorce vacas se alzarán sobre las ruinas y la oscuridad como una suave luz de esperanza y amistad. In June of 2002, a very unusual ceremony begins in a far-flung village in western Kenya. An American diplomat is surrounded by hundreds of Maasai people. A gift is about to be bestowed on the American men, women, and children, and he is there to accept it. The gift is as unsought and unexpected as it is extraordinary. A mere nine months have passed since the September 11 attacks, and hearts are raw. Tears flow freely from American and Maasai as these legendary warriors offer their gift to a grieving people half a world away. Word of the gift will travel news wires around the globe. Many will be profoundly touched, but for Americans, this selfless gesture will have deeper meaning still. For a heartsick nation, the gift of fourteen cows emerges from the choking dust and darkness as a soft light of hope and friendship. Master storyteller Carmen Agra Deedy hits all the right notes in this elegant story of generosity that crosses boundaries, nations, and cultures. An afterword by Wilson Kimeli Naiyomah the Maasai warrior at the center of the story provides additional information about his tribe and their generous actions. Thomas Gonzalez's stunning paintings, which are saturated with rich hues of oranges and browns, and blues and greens, capture the modest nobility of the Maasai people and the distinctive landscape of the African plain.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 4 - 8 years

Grade Level: 2 - 3

## Customer Reviews

A child asks if he has brought any stories, Carmen Agra Deedy writes. Kimeli nods. He has brought with him one story. It has burned a hole in his heart. Kimeli tells the people gathered around him about the destruction of the twin towers, and they are stunned. They cannot imagine buildings so tall they touch the sky, let alone fires so hot they melt steel. The villagers scarcely fathom what happened, but they are touched and want to help. What can we do for these poor people? one elder asks. The villagers are Masai, both warriors and cattle-herders, who measure their lives in part by the number of cattle they own. The illustrations by Thomas Gonzalez are beautifully evocative. They show Kimeli in his Stanford windbreaker and running shoes, surrounded by villagers and, of course, innumerable cows. Over and over in the scenes, two spears or two sticks or even two giraffe necks appear in the background, a subtle echo of the twin towers. Kimeli declares that he wishes to give his cow he has only one to the suffering Americans, and asks for the elders blessing. They not only approve but add 13 more cows to the gift. Later, the American ambassador comes to the village, and the Masai solemnly present him with 14 cows, as the book puts it, because there is no nation so powerful it cannot be wounded, nor a people so small they cannot offer mighty comfort. This is a true story, as an afterword by Wilson Kimeli Naiyomah explains. He describes how he went to America on a scholarship and was shown great kindness there. So when he wanted to do something after 9/11, he thought: To heal a sorrowing heart, give something that is dear to your own. That is how the United States came to receive foreign aid from a Masai village. And if you're wondering what happened to the cows: No, the United States ambassador has not been inviting all his friends to steak dinners. These are sacred cows that are not meant to be slaughtered, and a Masai elder is looking after them on our behalf. They have calved and the herd now numbers more

than 35. Kimeli explains the purpose of this charming book: The Masai wish is that every time Americans hear the simple story of 14 cows, they will find a measure of comfort and peace. Nicholas D. Kristof, a Times Op-Ed columnist, is the co-author, with Sheryl WuDunn, of *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression Into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*. --New York Times

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Starred Review. Grade 2-5 Kimeli Naiyomah returned home to his Maasai village from New York City with news of 9/11 terrorist attacks. His story prompted the villagers to give a heartfelt gift to help America heal. Deedy and Gonzalez bring Naiyomah's story to life with pithy prose and vibrant illustrations. Each block of text consists of a few short, elegant sentences: "A child asks if he has brought any stories.

Kimeli nods. He has brought with him one story. It has burned a hole in his heart." The suspenseful pace is especially striking when surrounded by Gonzalez's exquisite colored pencil and pastel illustrations. The colors of Kenya explode off the page: rich blues, flaming oranges, fire-engine reds, and chocolate browns. Full-page spreads depict the Maasai people and their land so realistically as to be nearly lifelike. Gonzalez manages to break the fourth wall and draw readers in as real-time observers. The book's only flaw is the less-than-concrete ending: "...there is no nation so powerful it cannot be wounded, nor a people so small they cannot offer mighty comfort" is an important message, but not a particularly satisfying one for children. Fortunately, their questions will be answered by Naiyomah's endnote, and it provides a fitting conclusion to this breathtaking chronicle. Rebecca Dash, New York Public Library --School Library Journal

Carmen Agra Deedy is a New York Times bestselling author and has been writing and traveling around the world telling stories for more than twenty years. Her books, including *Agatha's Featherbed*, *The Library Dragon*, *The Yellow Star*, and *Martina the Beautiful Cockroach* have received numerous awards and honors. Carmen has performed in many prestigious venues, but children are her favorite audience. Born in Havana, Cuba, she came to the United States as a refugee and like most immigrants sees the world from multiple perspectives.

Touching only begins to describe this book. For the Maasai the cow is life. For these gentle people to make such a gesture and sacrifice-to offer 14 cows to the American people-shows the deep connection they feel for the grieving Americans and for the sacredness of life. It shows what one can do for a neighbor. This book can open up a wonderful discussion for children about peace. I loved the sweeping colorful illustrations depicting the Maasai, especially the last portrait where we see the twin towers in the eye of the boy. A beautiful book, a beautiful story. May the gift of the Maasai continue to grow. - Biblio Reads Children's Book Review

The illustrations are amazing, and if you look at *Dream of Wings* and *The House on Dirty Third Street*, or Sonya Sotomayer, you will see how the art work dominates

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