

# REYNA GRANDE

## FROM UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANT TO AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR



**Reyna Grande** is the author of the bestselling memoir, *The Distance Between Us*, (Atria, 2012) and the sequel, *A Dream Called Home* (Atria, 2018). Her other works include the novels, *Across a Hundred Mountains*, (Atria, 2006) and *Dancing with Butterflies* (Washington Square Press, 2009), as well as *The Distance Between Us* young readers edition (Aladdin, 2016). Her books have been adopted as the common read selection by schools, colleges, and cities across the country. Her two forthcoming books are *A Ballad of Love and Glory* (Atria, March 15, 2022), a novel set during the Mexican-American War, and an anthology by and about undocumented Americans called *Somewhere We Are Human: Authentic Voices on Migration, Survival and New Beginnings* (HarperVia, June 7, 2022).

Reyna has received an American Book Award, the El Premio Aztlán Literary Award, and a Latino Spirit Award. In 2012, she was a finalist for the prestigious National Book Critics Circle Awards, and in 2015 she was honored with a Luis Leal Award for Distinction in Chicano/Latino Literature. The young reader's version of *The Distance Between Us* received a 2017 Honor Book Award for the Américas Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature and a 2016 Eureka! Honor Awards from the California Reading Association, and an International Literacy Association Children's Book Award 2017.

Writing about immigration, family separation, language trauma, the price of the American Dream, and her writing journey, Reyna's work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *the Dallas Morning News*, *CNN*, *The Lily at The Washington Post*, *Buzzfeed*, among others. In March 2020, she was a guest in Oprah's Book Club television program.

Born in Iguala, Guerrero, Mexico, Reyna was two years old when her father left for the U.S. to find work. Her mother followed her father north two years later, leaving Reyna and her siblings behind in Mexico. In 1985, when Reyna was nine, she left Iguala to make her own journey north and ran across the US-Mexico border to reunite with her family. After attending Pasadena City College for two years, Reyna became the first person in her family to set foot in a university. She went on to obtain a B.A. in creative writing and film & video from the University of California, Santa Cruz. She later received her M.F.A. in creative writing from Antioch University.



## BOOKS

### **SOMEWHERE WE ARE HUMAN: Authentic Voices on Migration, Survival & New Beginnings**

---

**“This is a book that makes visible those who have been invisible for years to the rest of the world. A wonderful and unprecedented collection [that] allows the reader to conclude, unequivocally, that at the end we’re all human . . . the only difference is just a little piece of paper. Immigration is the new frontier in the struggle for human rights. If you really want to understand what it is to be an immigrant, to be forced to leave your home, and to arrive in a new country, you have to read this book.”** —Jorge Ramos, journalist and news anchor with Univision

**“This collection is not only a great read, but an important one. I applaud everyone involved.”** —Luis Alberto Urrea, Pulitzer-Prize finalist and bestselling author of *The Devil’s Highway*

**“The people who walk through [Somewhere We Are Human] not only survive, but flourish; not only cross borders, but demolish the concept of borders; not only break down stereotypes, but build bridges.”** —Martín Espada, National Book Award-winning poet of *Floaters*

**“Urgent, necessary, and bold . . . [Grande and Guiñansaca’s] meticulous selections offer us an extraordinary range of histories, perspectives, and—most touchingly—dreams.”** —Rigoberto González, American Book Award-winning author of *Butterfly Boy: Memories of a Chicano Mariposa*

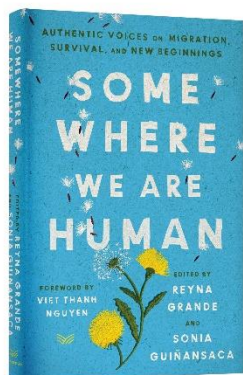
**“So often these stories are told by others; now we get to hear them told by these artists themselves. What a gift as these vocal cords sing, ringing of human resilience and love, so much love.”** —Victoria Chang, Award-winning author of *Obit* and *Dear Memory: Letters on Writing, Silence, and Grief*

**“This glorious collection speaks against the power of the state and what the state can’t see: the fullness of people who are so much more than their papers. . . . [Somewhere We Are Human] is what solidarity looks like!”** —Ken Chen, Award-winning Poet of *Juvenilia*

**“Somewhere We Are Human incites in me the kind of riot of heart and feeling and thinking that can only happen when many voices are sounding—all at once—part of the history of the world. Vital and radiant . . . you cannot be the same after reading it.”** —Aracelis Girmay, Award-winning poet of *Teeth*, the *Black Maria*, and *Kingdom*

**“The voices telling these stories and the stories themselves have not always been embraced in publishing, which makes this book such a glorious gift to readers and so necessary and vital for our times.”** —Ligiah Villalobos, writer and executive producer of *Under the Same Moon* (*La misma luna*)

**“Every piece in *Somewhere We Are Human* is so full of heart and rigor, it makes this collection one of the most important additions to undocumented literature. The poetry, prose, and visual art in its pages forge an incandescent testament of what it means to migrate, survive, and start anew.”** —Ingrid Rojas Contreras, author of *The Man Who Could Move Clouds*



Introduction by Pulitzer Prize–winning author Viet Thanh Nguyen

***Somewhere We Are Human*** (HarperVia, June 7, 2022; \$25.99) is a unique collection of groundbreaking essays, poems, and artwork by forty-one migrants, refugees and Dreamers—including award-winning writers, artists, and activists—that illuminate what it is like living undocumented today.

In the overheated debate about immigration, we often lose sight of the humanity at the heart of this complex issue. The immigrants and refugees living precariously in the United States are mothers and fathers, children, neighbors, and friends. Individuals propelled by hope and fear, they gamble their lives on the promise of America, yet their voices are rarely heard.

This anthology of essays, poetry, and art seeks to shift the immigration debate—now shaped by rancorous stereotypes and xenophobia—towards one rooted in humanity and justice. Through their storytelling and art, the contributors to this thought-provoking book remind us that they are human still. Transcending their current immigration status, they offer nuanced portraits of their existence before and after migration, the factors behind their choices, the pain of leaving their homeland and beginning anew in a strange country, and their collective hunger for a future not defined by borders.

Created entirely by undocumented or formerly undocumented migrants, *Somewhere We Are Human* is a journey of memory and yearning from people newly arrived in America, those who have been here for decades, and those who have ultimately chosen to leave or were deported. Touching on themes of race, class, gender, nationality, sexuality, politics, and parenthood, *Somewhere We Are Human* reveals how joy, hope, perseverance and dreams can take root in the toughest soil and bloom in the harshest conditions.

Also Available in Spanish.



# A BALLAD OF LOVE AND GLORY

LA Times Book Club Selection March 2022  
Las Comadres Book Club selection  
Signed First Editions Club selection, Tattered Cover

---

**"Panoramic and sweeping...by a storyteller who has hit her full stride."** — Julia Alvarez, bestselling author of *In the Time of the Butterflies* and *Afterlife*

**"Richly embroidered with historical accuracy...a literary triumph."** — Armando Lucas Correa, bestselling author of *The German Girl*

**"A testament to love's irrefutable power to flourish in the harshest of times."** — María Amparo Escandón, NYT bestselling author of *L.A. Weather*

**"A timely and fascinating novel about courage, love, and loyalty. It captivated me from the first line to its end."** — Janet Skeslien Charles, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Paris Library*

**"Astonishes with its passion and historical precision. A simply mesmerizing and unforgettable novel."** —Patricia Engel, NYT Bestselling author of *Infinite Country*

**"Grande delivers a worthy old-fashioned epic of romance and war... It's a great story and a revealing look at a lesser-sung chapter of American history."** —Publisher's Weekly

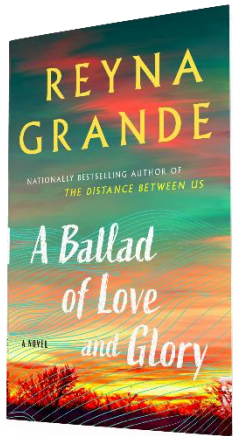
**"An impeccably researched and deeply felt story about a historical moment most people know little about."** —The San Francisco Chronicle

**"Inspired by real characters and events, this sweeping saga brings to light a lesser-known war with complex protagonists."** —*Kirkus Reviews*

**"A page-turner twofer – part romance, part war story – set during the Mexican-American War."** —USA Today

**"A *Ballad of Love and Glory* lives up to its title as it pays tribute to the heroism of everyday people called upon to defend their honor as well as their lives."** —BookPage

**"Grande is working a territory not unlike Viet Thanh Nguyen's reimagining of the war in Vietnam. Her rigor gives *A Ballad of Love and Glory* a moral weight that could not be more relevant, in this time of atrocity and war."** —*Alta*



**A BALLAD OF LOVE AND GLORY** (Atria Books; \$27, March 15, 2022) In the spring of 1846, after the controversial annexation of Texas, the US Army marches south to provoke war with Mexico over the disputed Río Grande boundary. Ximena is a gifted Mexican healer whose hopes and dreams are destroyed by Texas Rangers. Vowing to defend her country, Ximena uses her healing skills as an army nurse on the frontlines of the ravaging war. Meanwhile, John Riley, an Irish immigrant in the Yankee army, sickened by the nativism infecting the American ranks, swims across the Río Grande and joins the Mexican Army—a desertion punishable by execution. He forms the St. Patrick’s Battalion, a band of Irish soldiers willing to fight to the death for Mexico’s freedom. As Ximena and John find solace in each other, they are swept up by forces with the power to change history. They must fight not only for the fate of a nation but for their future together. Heartbreaking and lyrical, Reyna Grande’s spellbinding saga, inspired by true events and historical figures, brings these two remarkable characters to life and illuminates a largely forgotten moment in history that impacts the US-Mexico border to this day.



## A DREAM CALLED HOME

2022 California State University Channel Islands Common Read  
2022 Silicon Valley Reads Selection, CA  
2021 One Book Project Selection—CSU Bakersfield/ Kern County, CA  
2021-2022 San Juan College One Book/One Community Selection, NM  
2021 One Campus/One Book Club, Palo Verde College, CA  
2021 Entering Student Experience, University of Texas, El Paso  
2020-2022 Common Reading Selection Concordia University, TX  
2020-2021 Common Reading Selection Florida International University  
2020 Las Positas College Campus Wide Read Selection, CA

---

“This uplifting story of fortitude and resilience looks deeply into the complexities of immigration and one woman’s struggle to adapt and thrive in America.” —Publisher’s Weekly, STARRED Review

“Candid and emotionally complex, Grande’s book celebrates one woman’s tenacity in the face of hardship and heartbreak while offering hope to other immigrants as they “fight to remain” and make their voices heard in a changing America. A heartfelt, inspiring, and relevant memoir.” —Kirkus Reviews

“The emotional and practical challenges for a young immigrant are on full display in Grande’s evocative, inspiring memoir.” —People

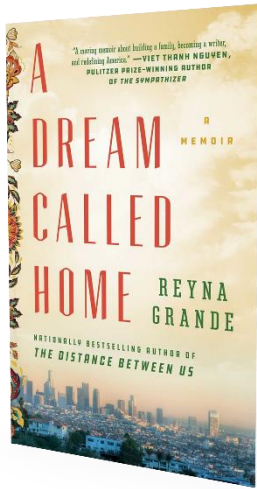
“Reyna Grande’s *A Dream Called Home* is a moving memoir about building a family, becoming a writer, and redefining America. Writers in need of inspiration should read this book.” —Viet Thanh Nguyen, Pulitzer Prize winner and New York Times bestselling author of *The Sympathizer*

“Reyna Grande is a fearless writer and a tireless warrior for the unrepresented and silenced. Her power is growing with every book.” —Luis Alberto Urrea, Pulitzer Prize finalist and author of *The Devil’s Highway*

“Reyna Grande’s march towards her brilliant career astonishes me. Here is a life story so unbelievable, it could only be true.” —Sandra Cisneros, bestselling author of *The House on Mango Street*

“Writers like Reyna Grande give us more than a story, more than a book, more than just a slice of their experience or their imagination; they give us a world in which to dwell. *A Dream Called Home* is such a place.” —Valeria Luiselli, award-winning author of *Tell Me How It Ends*

“Reyna Grande is a national treasure; her vision is not only singular, but essential to our contemporary culture. This is a beacon of a book.” —Carolina De Robertis, award-winning author of *The Gods of Tango*



**A DREAM CALLED HOME** (Atria Books; \$26.00, October 2, 2018) When Reyna Grande was nine years old, she walked across the US–Mexico border in search of a home, desperate to be reunited with the parents who had left her behind years before for a better life in Los Angeles. Instead, she found an indifferent mother, an abusive, alcoholic father, and a school system that belittled her heritage. With so few resources at her disposal, Reyna finds refuge in words, and it is her love of reading and writing that propels her to rise above until she achieves the impossible and is accepted to the University of California, Santa Cruz. Although her acceptance is a triumph, the actual experience of American college life is intimidating and unfamiliar for someone like Reyna, who is now once again estranged from her family and support system. Again, she finds solace in words, holding fast to her vision of becoming a writer, only to discover she knows nothing about what it takes to make a career out of a dream. Through it all, Reyna is determined to make the impossible

possible, going from undocumented immigrant of little means to “a fierce, smart, shimmering light of a writer” (Cheryl Strayed, author of *Wild*); a National Book Critics Circle Award Finalist “speak[ing] for millions of immigrants whose voices have gone unheard” (Sandra Cisneros, author of *The House on Mango Street*); and a proud mother of two beautiful children who will never have to know the pain of poverty and neglect. Told in Reyna’s exquisite, heartfelt prose, *A Dream Called Home* demonstrates how, by daring to pursue her dreams, Reyna was able to build the one thing she had always longed for: a home that would endure.

Also available in Spanish.



# THE DISTANCE BETWEEN US

2012 National Book Critics Circle Awards Finalist  
One of the 15 Best Books of 2012 (The Christian Science Monitor)  
One of the Best Adult Books for Teens 2012 (School Library Journal)

2021 Dean's Summer Reading, Russell Sage College, NY  
2021 Books Build Bridges selection, Hamilton East Public Library, IN  
2021 Battle Creek Reads Selection  
2020 Alta California Book Club Selection  
2019 Somersfield Academy Summer Read  
2019 The Rectory School Summer Read  
Godinez Fundamental High School Common Read 2019  
2018 Keker First Year Common Read, UNC Greensboro  
Rochester Reads 2018  
MacReads 2018 (McMinnville, OR)  
One Book/One Michiana 2018  
All Henrico Reads 2018 (VA)  
Roxbury Community College One Book/One Campus 2018/2019  
CityRead Book 2017, Brentwood, CA  
Timberland Reads Together 2017, WA  
2017 Telluride, CO One Book, One Canyon  
2017 Estes Park One Book, One Valley  
2017 Cal Poly Pomona Common Read  
2017 Northern Kentucky University First Year Experience  
2017 Avila University First Year Experience  
2017 Marist College Common Read  
2017 Cal State University, Monterey Bay Common Reading Experience

2016 One Book/One Community, Saginaw, MI  
2016 Camarillo Reads, Camarillo, CA  
2016 Common Reader, Colorado Mountain College, CO  
2015 One Book/One Villanova, Villanova University, PA  
2015 Sandy Springs Reads, Sandy Springs, GA  
2015 Los Angeles City College Book Program, CA  
2015 Mount San Jacinto College Common Read, CA  
2015 Read 2 Succeed Selection, Norco College  
2015 Roswell Reads, GA  
2015 One Book/One Leyden, Leyden High School, IL  
2014 One Maryland, One Book  
2014 One Community/ One Book—The U of Iowa Center for Human Rights  
2014 Santa Rosa Junior College Reads  
2014 One Book, One Community-San Juan College, NM  
2014 Rolling Meadows High School Summer Reading Program  
2014-15 "Book in Common," Butte College/Chico State University  
Grand Valley State University "Common Reading 2013  
California State University-Los Angeles "First Year Experience" Selection 2014  
2014 Monroe County's One Book/One Community  
Las Comadres Para Las Americas Book Club Nov/2012

---

**"A brutally honest book... the "Angela's Ashes" of the modern Mexican immigrant experience." –*LA Times***

**"Grande captivates and inspires."—Publishers Weekly, STARRED Review**

**"Grande is a fierce, smart, shimmering light of a writer with an important story to tell." –Cheryl Strayed, author of *Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail***





**"This heartrending and thoughtful memoir puts a human face on immigration's personal toll. A standout immigrant coming-of-age story."**—Kirkus Reviews

**"I've been waiting for this book for decades. What makes Grande's beautiful memoir all the more extraordinary is that, through this hero's journey, she speaks for millions of immigrants whose voices have gone unheard."** —Sandra Cisneros, author of *The House of Mango Street*

**"A brutally honest book... the *Angela's Ashes* of the modern Mexican immigrant experience."** —*The L.A. Times*

**"Grande grabs your heart and strums music on it."** —*The Dallas Morning News*

**"Puts a human face on issues that stir vehement debate..."** —*Booklist*

**"A visceral experience of poverty."** —*The Christian Science Monitor*

**"Makes palpable a human dilemma and dares us to dismiss it."** —*The California Report*

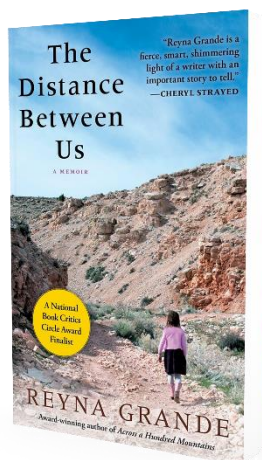
**"Grande is the kind of unsparing witness whose voice we don't hear enough."** —*Slate Magazine*

**"This book would be fabulous required reading for college freshmen or, even better, for freshman members of Congress."** —*The Washington Independent Review of Books*

**"Her compelling story, told in unvarnished, resonant prose, is an important piece of America's immigrant history."** —*BookPage*

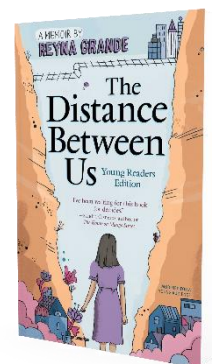
**"Reyna Grande's extraordinary journey toward the American dream will be an inspiration for anyone who has ever dreamed of a better life."**—Ligiah Villalobos, writer/executive producer of *Under the Same Moon/La Misma Luna*

**"In this poignant memoir about her childhood in Mexico, Reyna Grande skillfully depicts another side of the immigrant experience—the hardships and heartbreaks of the children who are left behind. Through her brutally honest firsthand account of growing up in Mexico without her parents, Grande sheds light on the often overlooked consequence of immigration—the disintegration of a family."**—Sonia Nazario, Pulitzer Prize winner, and author of *Enrique's Journey*



**THE DISTANCE BETWEEN US** (Atria Books; \$25.00; August 28, 2012) is Reyna Grande's personal, heart wrenching, and ultimately triumphant memoir about her journey from Mexico to the United States as an undocumented child immigrant, where she learned that the separation between a parent and child can be measured as much in emotional distance and abandonment as it can be in miles. An engaging writer with a talent for infusing her narrative with personal and affecting characterizations and stories, Grande offers a truly unprecedented look into the immigration experience and the reality that millions of people are facing each day.

**THE DISTANCE BETWEEN US, Young Readers Edition** (Aladdin, September 2016)



**2017 Honor Book Award for the Américas Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature**  
**2016 Eureka! Honor Awards from the California Reading Association**  
**International Literacy Association Children's Book Award 2017**  
**California Teacher's Association "California Reads"**

Also available in Spanish.

# DANCING WITH BUTTERFLIES

2010 International Latino Book Award  
2009 Las Comadres National Book Club Selection

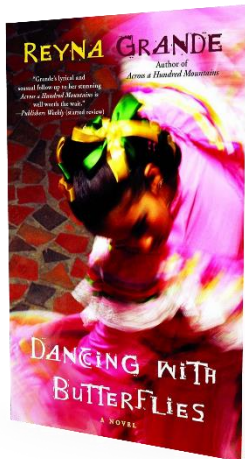
---

**"Grande's lyrical and sensual follow-up to her stunning *Across a Hundred Mountains* (2006) is well worth the wait."**—Publishers Weekly, starred review

**"Just when you think you know all about friends, Grande comes along to teach you something else about love and its mysteries, about good conversation over beers, sacrifices one makes for family, and about the joys and sins of shoe-stomping pride."** —Helena María Viramontes, author of *Their Dogs Came with Them*

**"Award-winning novelist Reyna Grande returns with a novel full of music, motion, and heart. *Dancing with Butterflies* is about four women whose stories and friendships are as rich as the Folklorico dance that brought them together. Grande is a novelist to watch."**—Tananarive Due, American Book Award-winning author of *Blood Colony*

**"Absorbing arcana about butterflies and Folklorico traditions, descriptions of food way beyond burritos, not to mention an unflinching depiction of the immigration debacle's personal toll, underscore the fierce humanity of these wise-Latinas-in-training."**—Kirkus Reviews



**DANCING WITH BUTTERFLIES** (Washington Square Press, 2009) uses the alternating voices of four very different women in a Los Angeles dance company called Alegría to weave a story of friendship and love. Yesenia, who founded Alegría, finds herself unable to dance and seeks a miracle from a plastic surgeon in Tijuana. Elena, grief stricken by the death of her child and the end of her marriage, falls dangerously in love with one of her under-age students. Elena's sister Adriana, wears the wounds of abandonment by a dysfunctional family and becomes unable to discern love from abuse. Soledad, the sweet-tempered undocumented immigrant who designs costumes for Alegría, must make the dangerous journey north after she returns to Mexico to see her dying grandmother. Reyna Grande has succeeded in bringing the world of Folklorico dance to life, with characters whose stories are so gripping, the reader cannot help but cry along with their travails and cheer their triumphs.



# ACROSS A HUNDRED MOUNTAINS

**2006 El Premio Aztlán Literary Award**

**2007 American Book Award**

**2010 Latino Books Into Movies Award**

2016 Woodland Reads

Ramona Convent Secondary School "One School/One Community" 2013-14

2013 Owensboro Community & Technical College Common Reading

Autry Book Club (April selection) 2011

2010 Bookshop Santa Cruz Book Club pick (May)

2010 San Mateo County Library "One Book/One Community"

2010 City of Watsonville "On the Same Page "

2009 Schoolcraft College Campus Read & Pageturners Book Club selection

2009 Teen Author Series, Free Library of Philadelphia

2008 Required Reading—Summer Bridge Program at Taft College

2007 Eastern Connecticut's "One Book/One Region"

2007 SummerTIME Read (USC)

2006 UCSC Freshmen Read (Kresge & Porter)

---

**"Grande's spare, elegantly written tale...is a timely and riveting read."**—People Magazine

**"Grande's deft portraiture endows even the smallest characters with grace."**—Publishers Weekly, starred review

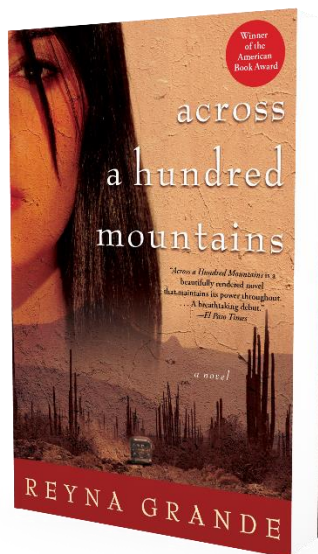
**"An affecting debut on Mexican poverty, illegal immigration and cosmic injustice. "** —Kirkus Reviews

**"A breathtaking debut."** —El Paso Times

**"Reyna Grande beguiles with the spare, unadorned prose of a fabulist, then stuns with emotional truths of shattering complexity....A tale full of memorable characters and even more memorable truths."** — Javier Grillo-Marxuach, writer/producer of *Lost and Boomtown*

**"Reyna Grande knows the heartbreaking worlds on either side of the border, where men are desperate, women are prey, and children want what they always want: the presence of love."** —Susan Straight, author of *Highwire Moon*

"Fabulous! There aren't many books that become so alive and real for me."—V́ctor Villaseñor, author of *Rain of Gold*



**ACROSS A HUNDRED MOUNTAINS** (Atria, \$23, Jun 20, 2006) is a stunning and poignant story of migration, loss, and discovery. After a tragedy that separates her from her mother, Juana Garcia leaves her small town in Mexico to find her father who left his home and family two years before to find work in America, El Otro Lado, and rise above the oppressive poverty so many of his countrymen endure. Out of money and in need of someone to help her across the border, Juana meets Adelina Vasquez, a young woman who left her family in California to follow her lover to Mexico. Finding each other—in a Tijuana city jail—they offer each other much needed material and spiritual support and ultimately become linked in the most unexpected way. Using a non-linear narrative style, where the pieces don't fall into place until the very end, Grande takes readers inside the lives of the people of Mexico who are left behind in the phenomenon of migration to the United States.


Also available in Spanish.



## RECOGNITIONS

**2021 California Latino Legislative Caucus Latino Spirit Awards**  
**2017 International Literacy Association Children's Book Award**  
**2016 Eureka! Honor Awards from the California Reading Association**  
**2017 Honor Book Award for the Américas Award for Children's Literature**  
**2015 Luis Leal Award for Distinction in Chicano/Latino Literature**  
**2012 National Book Critics Circle Awards Finalist**  
**2010 International Latino Book Award**  
**2007 American Book Award**  
**2006 El Premio Aztlan Literary Award**  
**2012 Las Comadres Para Las Americas Book Club**  
**One of the Best Adult Books for Teens 2012 (School Library Journal)**  
**One of the 15 Best Books of 2012 (The Christian Science Monitor)**

2021 Keynote Speaker, Las Positas Literary Festival (Livermore, CA)  
2021 Keynote Speaker, United Nations Association-Pasadena's Human Rights Day (Pasadena, CA)  
2020 Keynote Speaker, Senderos 10th Annual Latino Role Models Conference (Aptos, CA)  
2019 Keynote Speaker, SDSU Dual Language and English Learner Conference (San Diego, CA)  
2019 Walter W. Stiern Library, Writer in Residence, Cal State University Bakersfield, CA  
2019 Keynote Speaker, California Association of Teachers of English (CATE) (Burlingame, CA)  
2019 Featured Speaker, California Association of Bilingual Education (CABE) (Long Beach, CA)  
2019 Keynote Speaker, Deeper Learning Conference (San Diego, CA)  
2019 Keynote Speaker, Dual Language Essentials for Teachers and Administrators Conference (Houston, TX)  
2019 Keynote Speaker, Women of Color Community Empowerment Conference, Portland Comm. College (OR)  
2019 Keynote at 2019 ERWC Leadership Conference (Sacramento and Costa Mesa, CA)  
2019 Keynote Speaker, U of Wyoming, School of Culture, Gender & Social Justice Symposium (Laramie, WY)  
2019 Keynote Speaker, California Reading Association Awards Dinner (Sacramento, CA)  
2019 Keynote Speaker, Puente Motivational Conference (San Diego and Merced, CA)  
2019 Keynote Speaker, Mt SAC First-Gen Week (Walnut, CA)  
2019 Keynote Speaker, Beyond Words Fundraiser, Hartford Public Library (Hartford, CT)  
2018 Keynote Speaker, 9th Annual Transnational Latino Conference, DePaul University (Lincoln Park, IL)  
2018 K-12 Plenary speaker, CATESOL (Anaheim, CA)  
2017 Woman of the Year Award Keynote Speaker, CA State Assembly (Sacramento, CA)  
2017 Keynote Speaker, Voice Your Language Conference, San Diego State University (San Diego, CA)



2016 Keynote Speaker, Reclassification Celebration, Santa Maria JUSD (Santa Maria, CA)  
2014 Author-in-Residence, Park City High School (Park City, UT)  
2014 Keynote Speaker, MATSOL (Boston, MA)  
2014 Keynote Speaker, Borders of Diversity Conference, Pasadena City College (Pasadena, CA)  
2013 Keynote Speaker, CATESOL, (San Diego, CA)  
2013 Keynote Speaker, Puente Motivational Conference, (San Francisco & Riverside, CA)  
2013 Keynote Speaker, Comadres & Compadres Latino Writers Conference, (Brooklyn, NY)  
2013 Keynote Speaker, Latino Recognition Ceremony, Pasadena City College, (Pasadena, CA)  
2013 Cerro Visiting Author, Bakersfield College, Delano Campus, (Delano, CA)  
2013 Keynote Speaker, Goostree Women's Symposium (Fort Worth, TX)  
2013 Keynote Speaker, Latina History Day Conference, HOPE (Los Angeles, CA)  
2013 Featured Speaker, California Association of Bilingual Education, (Long Beach, CA)  
2012 Keynote Speaker, Texas Association of Bilingual Education (San Antonio, TX)  
2012 Keynote Speaker, Leonardo Dorantes Lecture Series (Santa Barbara, CA)  
2012 Writer-in-Residence, Pasadena City College (Pasadena, CA)  
2012 Keynote Speaker, Latino Youth Summit (Kearney, NE)  
2010 Keynote Speaker, Council of Mexican-American Administrators Scholarship Breakfast (Alhambra, CA)  
2010 Keynote Speaker, California Association of Bilingual Education - CABE (San Jose, CA)  
2010 Nancy R. Chandler Visiting Scholar, Central Oregon Community College (Bend, OR)  
2010 Keynote Speaker, PVUSD 4th Annual Parent Conference (Watsonville, CA)  
2009 Keynote Speaker, Regional Family Conference, Migrant Education Region XVIII (Santa Maria, CA)  
2009 Cerro Visiting Author, Bakersfield College (Bakersfield, CA)  
2009 Keynote Speaker, Adelante Mujer Latina Youth Conference (Laramie County, WY)  
2009 Commencement Speaker, CSUDH Dolores Huerta Graduation (Carson, CA)  
2008 Commencement Speaker, Pasadena City College (Pasadena, CA)  
2008 Keynote Speaker, Southland Council of Teachers of English (SCTE) Fall Conference (Los Angeles, CA)  
2007 Keynote Speaker, Conference of the Living Tree (Ventura, CA)  
2007 Keynote Speaker, English Council of California Two-Year Colleges (ECCTYC) Conference (San Jose, CA)  
2007 Highlighted author for LEAP (Learn, Experience, Achieve, and Persevere), Butte College (Chico, CA)



## A Conversation with Reyna Grande about *A Ballad of Love and Glory*

**Q: Historical Fiction was a bit of a departure for you, why did you choose to focus on this genre?**

A: When I first heard of the Saint Patrick's Battalion I became fascinated, especially with John Riley. But my biggest fascination was with the war itself. This is a time in history I knew so little about because growing up in the US meant I didn't learn about the Mexican-American War in my K-12 classroom. Like most Americans, I learned lots about the Revolutionary War and the Civil War, but the Mexican-American War of 1846-48 was a mere footnote in the history textbook. I never thought I would ever write historical fiction, but my desire to explore this moment in history and to learn more about the fight for the southern border, the conflict between the US and Mexico that in a way continues to this day, inspired me to give historical fiction a try. I'm so glad I did because I learned so much in the process about myself, and it helped me to reframe my identity as a Mexican living in the US. Writing this book was empowering on a personal level and a professional level.


**Q: What were your main sources for research? Did you travel to any of the areas mentioned in the book?**

A: I first began my research by Googling the Saint Patrick's Battalion. Then I read the books by Robert Miller, Michael Hogan, and Peter Stevens. From there I bought as many books as I could find on the Mexican-American War—history books but also first-person accounts written by soldiers. I read books about the Irish famine and stories of the peasantry. I read books on curanderismo and herbal healing, on cockfighting, on the flora and fauna of northern Mexico (and what is now South Texas). I read books on the Texas Rebellion, on Santa Anna—including his memoirs. I read the memoirs of Juan Seguin and some books on Juan Cortina. I lost track as to how many books I read in total, but I would say about a hundred! I also visited the battle sites in Palo Alto (near Brownsville) and Port Isabel, and Churubusco and Chapultepec (in Mexico City). I visited Santa Anna's hacienda in Veracruz, which is now a museum, and I went to John Riley's hometown in Clifden, Ireland.

**Q: What was one of the more fascinating facts you learned from your research for this novel?**

A: That the US deliberately provoked this war with Mexico by sending its troops to occupy Mexican lands, and the declaration of war against Mexico was based on a lie. I shouldn't have been so surprised because the US has justified wars with other countries based on lies (e.g., Iraq). I was also fascinated (but again, not surprised) that the president of Mexico—Antonio López de Santa Anna—had made secret agreements with the US president at the time so he could restore him to power. The theme of divided loyalties fascinated me. I explored this theme with John Riley as well because back in Ireland he and other Irishmen joined the British Army, the very army that was oppressing his homeland.






As a redcoat, he must have been seen as a traitor by his own people. In my novel, this is something that haunts Riley. I explored this theme of divided loyalties in the plight of the Tejanos—the native Mexicans who got caught up in the Texas Rebellion, many of whom allied themselves with the white insurgents to rebel against Mexico and after the rebellion became second class citizens in their own homeland. Tejanos like Juan Seguín betrayed the Mexican people only to discover that he was no longer welcome in the new Texas republic.

**Q: The story alternates between John and Ximena’s points of view – did you prefer writing from one character’s perspective over another?**

A: John Riley was very easy to write and so for the first couple of years I mostly wrote from his point of view. Because he is a real historical figure, I knew enough about his participation in the war to be able to track his timeline and figure out his plot points. I knew what he had done but not why. The challenge in rendering him onto the page as a three-dimensional character was figuring out his motivations, his dreams, his yearnings, and his psychological wounds. So, I had to dig really deep into his psyche to understand what drove him to desert and what kept him fighting. I had to draw from my own experience as well. Riley was a father (and maybe a husband) who had left his family behind in Ireland—a country ravaged by poverty and hunger. Similarly, my own father had left his wife and children in Mexico in extreme poverty. My father also fell in love with a nurse (a nurse assistant) when he was here in the US, and he ended up leaving my mother for this woman. I thought of my father when I wrote about John Riley.

**Throughout John’s chapters in the book, you see the brutality that the American officers show the foreign soldiers in the army. It’s easy to understand why the Irish soldiers felt little loyalty to the United States and fled to Mexico, but John resists this opportunity at first. Why do you think it took so much for John to finally desert?**

In my research, I learned that American soldiers accused the immigrant deserters, especially John Riley, of being nothing more than malcontents looking for a better deal. Nothing but traitors and renegades. That isn’t how they are portrayed in my novel. As an immigrant myself who has suffered from racism, discrimination, and micro-aggressions while living in American society, I have a different understanding as to why these immigrant soldiers might have deserted, and I have first-hand experience with the inner turmoil they suffered while making that decision—to leave or to stay. I gave that inner turmoil to John Riley. He had dreams of a better future for his family. He wanted to be accepted by American society, and he felt that if he fought for the US, if he pledged his loyalty to this country, he would be welcomed and allowed to make a home here. Like most immigrants, he wanted to give this country the best of himself he had to offer, but one day he had enough of the mistreatment and threw himself into the river and swam to the other side. For many immigrants, that disillusionment with life in the US is a sad reality.



**Q: John Riley was a proven figure in history, but Ximena was inspired by a John Greenleaf Whittier poem. How did you come up with her character and the struggles she faced throughout the war?**

A: Ximena was extremely challenging to write and for the first few years of working on this novel I had nothing but blank pages in her chapters. Honestly, my manuscript had so many holes it looked like Swiss cheese. Because she was based on a short poem, I had to create her from scratch. It took me a long time to figure out her backstory—as a Tejana who witnessed the Texas Rebellion, about her grandmother being an Indigenous healer, her husband as a ranch owner and horse trainer. Once I had enough pieces of her to guide me, she began to come alive for me. When I got to the part where she meets Santa Anna, she was a living, breathing, person to me and I was deeply invested in her character. Part 3 was so much easier for me to write Ximena’s chapters because by then I knew who she was, I knew how she saw the world, and I had found her voice.


**Q: The Mexico setting often feels like another character throughout the story, the land itself as a living breathing thing. What connections to this land do you hope readers come away with after reading?**

A: I wanted to show the beauty of the Mexican landscape because that is something I deeply care about. The reader gets to see this beauty through Ximena’s eyes, especially of the Rio Grande region where she lived. The loss of the land is even more heartbreaking considering what happened to this region after the war—a lot of this natural beauty is gone. The mesquite and huisache groves are mostly gone, the chaparral and the prairies were stripped away in favor of giant cattle ranches, farms, and cotton plantations. Not to mention a big, ugly border wall. The Rio Grande is not what it used to be due to all the river dams, overuse of water, and pollution which have weakened it so much it is no longer the fierce beautiful river it once was. The land has seen its fair share of trauma, as have the Mexican people who live there.

I deeply enjoyed writing John Riley’s impressions of Mexico. Seeing my native country through his eyes made me so nostalgic for it! I really wanted Riley to engage deeply with the Mexican setting, so I made him be very aware of it. He is actively noticing the differences and similarities to his homeland, including the Catholic religion. Riley falls in love with Mexico in a way I wanted the reader to fall in love with it as well.

**Q: In any story about war, there are losses. Was there one death in the book that was particularly hard to write?**

A: All of them were difficult—Sullivan, Maloney, Joaquín, Patrick Dalton and the other San Patricios hanged at the gallows...but the one that was deeply personal to me was Nana Hortencia’s death. She is based on my own grandmother, Jacinta Benítez Catalán, who was a healer. She died quite suddenly after being stung by a scorpion. I got to Mexico three hours after my grandma died so I never got to say goodbye. This is why I write so much about her. In fact, my grandma has appeared in every single one of my books in different versions. Every time I wrote a scene with Ximena and her grandmother, it felt real to me, as if I could hear my grandma speaking to me through Nana Hortencia.



**One of the characters in the novel was the real life controversial historical figure Santa Anna. Ximena has multiple conversations with Santa Anna as she tends to his leg, and their relationship is incredibly layered and complex. Why was it important to include this character in the novel, and was it difficult to write him given his complicated motivations?**

I couldn't get away with not writing about Antonio López de Santa Anna. He's such a fascinating character. I was intimidated writing about him, the most hated man in Mexico, and probably in Texas, too. A larger-than-life character, I worried how I was going to be able to bring him to the page. But from the first scene, he just jumped in and took over and then I couldn't get him to stop talking! I liked his complexity. I've never liked how he gets featured in books and films as a one-dimensional character, as a "bloodthirsty, barbarous villain..." In *Ballad*, it was important to me to capture him in all his contradictions. It helped me to reframe the image I had of him and understanding his role in the Texas Rebellion, in the Mexican-American War, but most importantly, his impact on Mexico.

**This novel is a sweeping, historical saga, but at its heart it is a love story. Why is the love between Ximena and John so integral to this novel? Why are they so drawn to each other?**


I have to admit that I struggled with the love story because I wasn't writing a romance novel, but I also wasn't just writing a war story. I had to find a balance. It was difficult to figure out how to develop the romance without the war becoming a mere backdrop, and vice versa—how to write about the war without the love story taking a back seat. The war is as much of a main character as John Riley and Ximena, but without their love, there was no story—only battles and politics.

When I began to research John Riley, I learned that there was a rumor that he'd fallen in love with a Mexican widow. And once I discovered Whittier's poem, I knew that Ximena was going to be that widow who stole John Riley's heart. Another thing that influenced the relationship between John and Ximena is my father's story. When my father immigrated to the US, he left my mother and his children behind in Mexico in dire poverty. He came here to find a better life

for us, but he met a nurse assistant and fell in love with her. When I was writing about John Riley and his wife, and his conflicting feelings for Ximena, I thought of my father.

Through Ximena and John's relationship, I wanted to honor the love that Mexico has for its Irish heroes. Ximena falls in love with him because he is an honorable man who has taken great risks to defend her country in an unjust war. John falls in love with her because of her strength, her kindness, and because they are both facing danger and death together. The war forges their relationship. They find solace in each other's arms.

**Throughout the novel, there are various comparisons between Mexico and Ireland. The landscapes may be different, but they share the same religion, and a lot of the Irish, like John**



**Riley, see the soul of their country represented in Mexico. Why do you think so many of the Irish identified with Mexico?**

I asked myself this question again and again as I was writing the book. My feeling was that because the Irish had spent years being oppressed by a Protestant nation, they worried that Mexicans would face the same fate. In the US, the Irish were being severely discriminated against for being Catholic, and the mobs were destroying Catholic neighborhoods, like in Philadelphia. In the US Army, Catholic soldiers were forced to attend Protestant services. So, religion was another factor that contributed to their feelings toward Mexico, a Catholic nation. Also the way the Americans expressed themselves about Mexicans was familiar to the Irish who had heard the English use those insults on their own people as “ignorant, filthy semi-savages, a miserable mongrel race.” In Mexico, they were welcomed as Catholic brothers and as heroes. Another point I make in the novel is that because Mexico had a caste system—where light skin offered many privileges—the Irish deserters suddenly saw themselves benefitting from their whiteness in a way they hadn’t in the US. We might see them as white today, but it took the Irish years to become part of white America and enjoy white privilege.

**What do you hope that readers learn about this period of history after finishing this book?  
What do you want them to take away from this story?**

For my Mexican-American readers, I hope that they feel empowered by this book because *A Ballad of Love and Glory* subverts the narrative—especially the narrative of Mexicans as the outsiders in this country. The novel also offers a new perspective—or corrective—on the history we thought we knew about the US and Mexico and especially, the southern border. I hope that this is an eye-opening read for readers in general. And although I hope everyone will love my novel, and appreciate what it’s trying to do, I know it’s going to make some people uncomfortable. But I think that’s the best part about this novel—it will challenge readers to confront the truth of our history, especially the shameful parts. US brutality and aggression isn’t something we are taught in school, but I for one am tired of the Swiss-cheese method of teaching US history in our classroom. We need to stop leaving out the parts that make us uncomfortable or don’t fit into the rosy narrative we want to tell about this country. I hope that *A Ballad of Love and Glory* can inspire readers to learn about the Mexican-American War and the effect that it had on Mexican people on both sides of the border.



## A Conversation with Reyna Grande about *The Distance Between Us*


**Q: When did you decide to write a memoir, and why?**

A: I started to write the memoir in 1997, when I was a junior at UC Santa Cruz. By then, I had discovered that writing could be very healing. I wanted to exorcise the demons that haunted me. I wanted to unload the burden I carried—the memories that left me scarred. But I couldn't do it. The pain was too raw. And I couldn't bear the thought of having to go back there and live everything all over again. So I turned my story into a novel, and that is how *Across a Hundred Mountains* was born. By fictionalizing my story, I was able to put some distance between myself and my emotions. But I never gave up the idea of someday writing the real story.

When I graduated from UC Santa Cruz, I became a middle school teacher. I taught ESL to immigrant children. Most of them had gone through a similar experience as I had. Before, I hadn't given much thought to my experience with family separation in a larger context. Later I learned that 80% of immigrant children in US schools have been separated from their parents in the process of migration. I realized that it was an experience that was all too common, yet it wasn't part of the conversation about immigration. Immigrant children's voices were not being heard. So, I began to write about my personal experience as a child left behind, as a border crosser and undocumented youth. Then when the Dream Act failed to pass that gave me more encouragement to finish the memoir. I wanted people to see the immigrant experience through a child's eyes. I also wanted to give all those young people I have met at my presentations a story that would inspire them to fight for their own dreams.

**Q: You write about your experience in being left behind by your parents in Mexico and how it affected you during your formative years. Do you believe this experience helped or hindered you to become the person you are today?**

A: It did both. My experience of being left behind helped me because it made me strong. I learned to be independent and self-reliant. It taught me to be a survivor. But it also hindered me because it left me emotionally scarred. My childhood was dominated by my parents' absence. As a child I felt unloved. I felt abandoned. That, coupled by the abuse I suffered at the hands of my father later in life, gave me a very low self-esteem. For a long time, I didn't have a sense of self-worth, and I made some bad choices because I was



trying to find love outside of my home. It took me years to finally start to love myself and stop worrying about whether my parents loved me or not. Of course, now that I am a mother, all this trauma of my childhood and my relationship with my parents has affected how I parent my own children, in good and bad ways.


**Q: As you wrote your memoir, did your thoughts about your parents change? Did your feelings toward them become more positive or negative?**

A: Writing the memoir helped me to understand my parents better. For a long time, I only saw my experience through my eyes—their daughter’s eyes, and it was tainted by the lingering resentment and anger I had. But I hardly ever thought about their own experiences, and the circumstances they found themselves in and how terribly heartbreaking it is for a parent to be in a situation where the only way to give your child a better life is to leave them or risk their lives bringing them with you across the border. The first draft of the memoir was very angry in tone, accusatory and judgmental even. Both my parents came across as one-dimensional. I gave this first draft to a former teacher, and what he said to me was this. “Reyna, this memoir is one big grudge against your parents.” And he was right. The challenge for me was to remove all of the negative emotions that were coming across. I had to take a step back, look at my parents as “characters” in my book, and get to know them from the inside out. Just as I handled my fictional characters, where I knew everything about them—their fears, their aspirations, their past, their goals, etc.—that is how I needed to know my parents. I needed to give them their humanity. When I finished the memoir, I felt that at some level, I could finally understand my parents—and forgive them—and that was very healing for me.

**Q: Were you concerned about what your family would say or react to you writing this memoir?**

A: I knew my siblings would be okay with it. But I was actually terrified about what my parents would think, especially my father. I was exposing so many things about him, especially his drinking and violence. My father was always such a private person he wouldn’t even tell his own children about his past. There were many moments when I felt that I couldn’t publish it. That I shouldn’t publish it. Sometimes I felt like calling my agent and telling her to pull the plug. But then I would remind myself of why I was writing this story—I was doing it for those young people I wanted to inspire—and I would keep writing. Then my father passed away halfway through my writing of the memoir, and upon his death, I tried harder to make sure that the reader understood my father. That they knew, as I did, that he wasn’t a bad man. He was a man with good intentions, but with too many demons haunting him.

**Q: Writing a memoir is considered difficult in that it’s a balance between getting your own personal experience on paper yet ensuring that essential writing techniques and skill are used. How did you manage to turn your life into a book?**




A: My former writing teacher, whom I mentioned earlier, told me that even though I was writing about my life, I was still writing a book—which is a work of art. I was making art. I found that idea to be daunting. But I was lucky to have two published novels under my belt. It took me at least three drafts before I was able to move past my emotions and break away from my “personal” self to start looking at the memoir through a writer’s eyes. I began to look at the “material” and thought about the narrative arc for each chapter and for the overall book. At first, the memoir felt like a bunch of memories that didn’t connect, so I worked hard to imbue each memory with meaning. I looked at my family as “characters” and worked on their development and making them three dimensional, the way I would have done if I were writing a novel. I interviewed my sisters, my brother, my parents the way I would have ‘interviewed’ my fictional characters to get to know them. As I got closer to finishing the book, I began to look at the themes in the book, the symbolisms, the metaphors, and I gave them more weight. At first, it was extremely difficult to write the memoir. It was too personal. Too raw. Too painful. But when I put on my writer’s hat, I was able to turn all of those emotions into art. Instead of letting my trauma transform me, I transformed *it* into something positive and beautiful.

**Q: How is the storytelling process different in writing one's memoir versus writing a work of fiction?**

A: At first it was difficult for me to get a “handle” on writing nonfiction. I felt limited by the fact that I had to tell the truth and restrain my imagination. But then I discovered that it really isn’t that much different to write a memoir than to write a novel. Both novels and memoirs need the same thing—developed characters, a narrative arc, conflict, themes, setting, dialogue, etc. The only difference is that one is a product of your imagination, and the other is a rendering of real events. Then the challenge for me was how to look at the material (my life) and select the events that would tell a concise story with a narrative arc. When I write novels, I know that I have to come up with the plot points right away. But because I was writing about my own life, I had a hard time because we don’t think of our lives in terms of plot points! But we do have those defining moments, the moments that shaped us, so I was able to look at my life and identify those plot points. Then the difficulty for me became what to put in and what to leave out. I discovered that what you leave out is just as important.

**Q: What did you enjoy the most about writing *The Distance Between Us*?**

A: What I loved about writing this memoir is that I got to spend time with my older sister, Mago. It allowed me the opportunity to return to my childhood and to once again be her “Nena,” her baby. My sister and I don’t have the same relationship we used to. We grew up! When I left for Santa Cruz to study, that was the point when our lives took different paths and as we got older the age gap of four years became insignificant. So now we no longer have that mother-daughter bond. I love my sister very much, but now she is just my sister. As I wrote the memoir, I was able to reconnect with her once again when she was still my “little mother.” At remembering everything that she did for me, how she nurtured me, took care of me, stood by me for all those



years, I was able to look at our lives now and realize that even though our relationship has changed, there will always be a special bond that connects us.

**Q: How do you see the relative role of poverty in the lives of immigrants? Do you see it as a motivation for advancing oneself and reaching for opportunities, or as a limitation to success? Or both?**

A: I think it's both. Living in poverty is a great test of endurance. For some people it is a motivating factor to look for opportunities to better oneself. But there are costs, too. My father left Mexico to pursue a better life for himself and his family and look what it did to us--it broke up my family. It left us traumatized for the rest of our lives. Yet I understand that if we had remained in Mexico, we would have never been able to break free of that poverty. That is the difference that I see between my life in Mexico and the US. In Mexico, if you are born in poverty chances are you will die in poverty. In the US, there are some opportunities to escape the poverty you are born into. It's difficult but not impossible. Although I grew up poor in Los Angeles, I had things I never had before—free meals at school, free access to instruments (I marched the Rose Parade three times because of this), free access to books at the public library—this was a life-changing opportunity for me. I would have never discovered my love of reading and writing otherwise. My mother used to say that she'd rather be poor here than in Mexico.


**Q: How did discovering literature and writing give you a direction and a sense of identity in your new life in America?**

A: When I discovered books, I felt that I had been saved. My childhood was full of things that were beyond my control. Books gave me an escape. I was able to hide in the pages of those books and for a moment get away from all the chaos around me. Once I discovered Latino Literature when I was in college, the books I read helped me to define myself. I was Mexican and American. I could celebrate my Mexican culture while at the same time also navigate the American culture. I could take the best from both cultures to create the best version of myself. I was not less for being an immigrant. I was more—I was bilingual, binational, and bicultural.

**Q: Your memoir is very topical, especially given the political climate surrounding issues of immigration and the undocumented, in particular the young people in this country today facing the same issues you did as an undocumented immigrant. How do you see your role in relation to them?**

A: I do particularly feel a connection to the DREAMers, those young undocumented people who were brought to the U.S. by their parents when they were children. That was my own experience. I was brought here by my father when I was nine years old. Like me, many of the DREAMers were left behind by their parents in their native countries. Studies show that 80% of Latin American children in U.S. schools have been separated from a





parent during the process of migration. The only difference between me and the DREAMers is that I was able to legalize my status when I was 15 years old, whereas they have not been given that chance. Their lives are in limbo, and they live in uncertainty and fear. I deeply believe it is time to end their suffering and for them to be given the chance that I was given—to be able to reach their full potential.

**Q: Many would say that you are in a sense living the American Dream and that your story is, at its heart, an American story. Do you see it this way?**

A: I do see it that way. The US is a nation of immigrants, and so, the quintessential American story is the immigrant story. Even though for years now the US has become less and less welcoming to foreigners, most immigrants still see America as the land of opportunity. At least, this is what it will always be to me. I was born in a shack made of bamboo sticks and cardboard, on a dirt floor where I was delivered by a midwife. I was born into extreme poverty. The odds were not in my favor. Yet I have come a long way from my humble beginnings. The journey was not all easy. But through hard work and dedication, and yes, also with luck and help from others, I was able to accomplish my dreams. But I am not blind to the fact that not all immigrants are able to accomplish what I have. Especially new arrivals. Anti-immigrant sentiments in this country have increased since I arrived, and the opportunities—specially to legalize one's status—have diminished. It doesn't escape me that had I immigrated today instead of 35 years ago, I would have ended up detained, deported, disappeared, or dead.

