



Looking for Esperanza

By Adriana Paramo

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Literary Nonfiction. Latino/Latina Studies. Inspired by a story about an immigrant mother who walked the desert from Mexico to the USA with the dead body of her baby strapped to her own, Adriana Páramo immersed herself in the underground world of undocumented women toiling in the Florida fields. This fieldwork and the anonymous voices of the women she encountered while looking for the mother in the story are captured in LOOKING FOR ESPERANZA, winner of the 2011 Social Justice and Equality Award in creative nonfiction.

"A timely and stunning project, Adriana Páramo's LOOKING FOR ESPERANZA is a heart-wrenching collection of portraits of Mexican women whose lives and journeys illustrate the complexity and dignity of the undocumented immigrant. Páramo writes with admirable honesty and sensitivity, making visible perspectives seldom explored in either literature or journalism: the Mexican laborer in the American Southeast, the woman as border-crosser, and the stories of struggle that rise above tragedy and travesty to highlight perseverance and hope."—Rigoberto González

"Adriana Páramo's LOOKING FOR ESPERANZA is an essential window into the hidden world of undocumented female farmworkers struggling to maintain their health, their families, and their dignity in an unforgiving world. Páramo shines a necessary light on these defiant fearless women fighting for their own small morsel of the American Dream. The result is a book both powerful and unforgettable."—Dinty W. Moore

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Editorial Review

Review

Looking for Esperanza is an essential window into the hidden world of undocumented female farmworkers struggling to maintain their health, their families, and their dignity in an unforgiving world. Paramo shines a necessary light on these defiant fearless women fighting for their own small morsel of the American Dream. The result is powerful and unforgettable. --Dinty W. Moore, author of *The Mindful Writer*

Mere words on paper quickly become a fireball, a careful and fierce hand that will grab your heart and pull, that will hurt even as it feeds you. Paramo boldly merges ethnography, memoir, research, quest, letter, and poetry, inventing the language and tongue to describe a sustained encounter with undocumented Mexican agricultural workers. This astonishing work sets a new standard in the form of creative nonfiction. --Sonya Huber, author of *Cover Me: A Health Insurance Memoir*

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About the Author

Adriana Paramo is a nonfiction writer born and raised in Colombia. After spending ten years in the oil industry as a student and as a petroleum engineer, she decided to leave her homeland and moved to Alaska. In 1992 she graduated from the University of Alaska Anchorage as a cultural anthropologist. There, she conducted field work among Yup'ik Eskimos, an ethnochoreology, an innovative approach that linked their dances to their socio-cultural experiences. Adriana later moved to Kuwait where she taught young Muslim girls at a private school. She also engaged in advocacy of immigrant women's rights: specifically, Indian women working as servants but living in squalor in one of the wealthiest countries in the world. The results of her fieldwork, along with explorations of the lives of more privileged women living in Kuwait, evolved into *Desert Butterflies*, an unpublished manuscript. After four years of research in the Middle East, Adriana returned to the USA and taught Humanities and Anthropology at a college in Central Florida. She is the author of *My Mother's Funeral*, (CavanKerry Press) which tells the story of a Colombian family of six women struggling to triumph among poverty and neglect. Interspersed between these stories are snippets of the present life of the author, now an immigrant in the USA. Adriana volunteered her time as a transcriber for *Voice of Witness*, a non-profit book series founded by author Dave Eggers, which empowers those most closely affected by contemporary social injustice. Adriana also volunteers her time and writing skills to the PEN Prison Writing Program and produces *LOL, Life Out Loud*, the only reading series in Tampa Bay exclusively dedicated to nonfiction.

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Ellen Scherer:

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