



Book Review published by:

Inland Empire Community Newspapers (IECN)

El Chicano • Colton Courier • Rialto Record • The Inland Empire Weekly
(also on website www.iecn.com)

Book review "Journey of Hope: Memoirs of a Mexican Girl" **02/May/2008**

By Cynthia Mendoza ([**www.iecn.com**](http://www.iecn.com)**)**

Did you ever dream about a beautiful, giant place filled with all the food you could possibly want and available for you to purchase right then and there? Probably not, because for most people in the United States, such a place already exists. It's called a grocery store. But for Rosalina Rosay, it was truly a magical, faraway place she could only dream about after hearing stories from those who had actually set foot in such a wondrous place.

Very little is left to the imagination about what life was like in a small, poor Mexican town of Pueblonuevo, Guanajuato during the 60's and 70's, described in the book *Journey of Hope: Memoirs of a Mexican Girl*. The autobiographical book written by Rosay reads like something between a transcript of a very long, heartfelt, one-on-one conversation with a young girl and the narration of an academy award winning film, but the message the reader takes away is the same; a deep sense of genuine gratitude for the opportunities and blessings most of us take for granted in the United States.

Whether they like it or not, readers will see something as mundane as a bar of soap through a completely new set of eyes, the eyes of a young Mexican girl born into grinding poverty.

"...my oldest sister, Teresa... was already working in America-or El Norte (The North) as we usually called it. She headed there after her husband left her with their three kids. She is working as a maid and nanny....she sent white, creamy, fragrant soaps that were easy to hold and much different than the big, brown, non-fragrant bars of soap the whole family normally shared."

Soap was just one tiny detail that drove into Rosalina the reality of the circumstances that she was born into.

"Unlike America, Mexico around the late 60's was a very bad place to live, especially for children...My mother had six sons and four daughters, not including the ones that had died as babies. Most women my other's age had eight, nine or ten kids, often giving birth to babies around the same time as did their oldest daughters as was the case in our family."

As recounted in the book, toothbrushes were yearly luxuries as was the toothpaste that went on them, and there was no toilet paper or tissue. Social and personal interaction did not fare much better. Beating, humiliating and a general disregard for children's emotional needs were part of daily life. Described in the memoir men working in El Norte often came home for their newborn's baptism only to return to America once again leaving behind a pregnant wife.

The author weaves together so many elements, political, social, economic, religious, and family dynamics in order to create one seamless, poignant tapestry of the human experience in one tiny corner of the world in Guanajuato, Mexico.

Rosay's life journey eventually brought her to the land she had only heard and dreamt about as a child.

"I am at Cal State Northridge wearing a cap and gown and al I am thinking about is how much I love America," reads one of the final chapters in the book. "I am the first person in my family to graduate from college and I know this would not be possible if I was not in this country."

Rosay holds a degree in accounting. By the time she was in her mid-twenties she was working for a local CPA firm and also enjoys giving back by being involved as a Sierra Club leader, soccer coach and Girl Scout leader.

And besides sharing her life story, Rosay also takes the opportunity to voice some of her views about the political situation between the United States and Mexico.

She feels very strongly that US trade policies and NAFTA are not to blame for illegal immigration since there was no NAFTA in the 60's and 70's and life was still very hard.

She also directs a few comments towards former Mexican President Vicente Fox and his successor Felipe Calderon.

"It saddens me when I hear the current and former president of Mexico talk about illegal immigrants. The current president..says the American economy needs illegal immigrants. The former president has said that illegal immigrants come to this country to do the jobs that Americans do not want to do. They both say this as if they are proud of providing an uneducated, unskilled workforce....these two presidents should be ashamed of this."

But overall, the common thread that runs through the entire book is a sense of gratitude and appreciation for the opportunities she has been afforded in the United States.

"I have tried to pay back this country by raising kids that do respect Mexico, but that love and have loyalty to only one country, America."

For more information visit www.arpublish.com Rosay is also working on website called www.hopeinmexico.com