Clarion Review

Autobiography & Memoir

Finding Myself
Gelasia Marquez
Trafford
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Three Stars (out of Five)

Gelasia Marquez's memoir, *Finding Myself*, is delivered through the lens of her career in psychology. She uses professional terminology throughout the book and at times analyzes her own motivations and those of others. She divides her life story into stages and is candid without overdoing it. The book's appendix includes a passage from her doctoral dissertation, *Toward a Comprehensive Model to Accompany Immigrant Hispanic Families in Cultural Transition*.

Marquez uses the book's first sentence to draw the reader in: "Every family has more than one secret that is hidden and never transmitted from one generation to the other." Without explicitly saying so, Marquez breaks the chain of silence by writing about what she calls her family of origin's "most secretive" secret: an aunt's struggle with mental illness. The author was profoundly affected by her aunt's mental illness and her family members who were persistent in trying to help her aunt get better served as role models. That family situation spurred Marquez's interest in studying psychology.

Marquez was born in Cuba before Castro took over. Her account highlights the Spanish immigrant population in Cuba since some of her ancestors left Spain for greater opportunity in the Caribbean nation. Marquez's life also points to the impact economic disparity has on families. Her family was not wealthy, but Marquez had educational opportunities and spent the greater part of a decade away at boarding school; this separation put physical and emotional distance between the author and her relatives.

The author watched as the Catholic church and its school system were drained of influence by Castro's government. As an adult she worked as a trained lay worker, a vocation she enjoyed but later had to give up when her group was dissolved. Marquez marries a man who spent a decade in jail for being a political dissident. Her first-person story gives insight into what

it is like to live under such a regime: “The ability to control one’s own life is an important element in psychological health. Cubans cannot see themselves as controlling their own destiny…”

Marquez immigrates to the United States with her family when she is in her forties. In the US she continues her education, faces the challenge of being an immigrant, survives breast cancer, and sees her son grow into adulthood.

In telling her life story, Marquez, a native Spanish speaker shows an excellent command of English, and the book is mostly written in English. The author translates some passages, such as the epigraph, into English and she explains the meaning of some Spanish vocabulary. However, someone who reads Spanish will benefit more because they will be privy to certain parts that are not translated into English. While she was still longing for a child, the author wrote a heartfelt poem about her desire for motherhood that she decides not to translate because she felt translation would take away too much from the poem. The book begins with an e-mail from the author’s son written in Spanish that serves as a testimonial to her benevolent nature.

The book is printed in a very large font which may require adjustment for some and prove to be helpful for others. There are spots where better proofreading would have picked up editing mistakes, but overall, the author’s ability to express herself in English underscores her tale of hard work and sacrifice. This book will probably be of interest to readers with academic leanings.

Jada Bradley