

From Farmworker to Astronaut / De campesino a astronauta: My Path to the Stars/ Mi viaje a las estrellas

José M. Hernández

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José M. Hernández's *From Farmworker to Astronaut* layers two narratives: first, the saga of Hernández's trip to the International Space Station, and second, his childhood, early adulthood, and work to qualify to be an astronaut.

With clarity, humility, and passion, Hernández recalls a childhood marked by family love and hard work. The Hernándezes migrated as farm workers, splitting their time between Mexico and California, picking many fruits and vegetables. Hernández's parents valued education, and a remarkable teacher helped to convince them to make a permanent home in California so that their children could pursue long-term opportunities.

Hernández's trip to space is covered down to technical details, and the narrative is nail-biting, exciting, and comprehensible. Details like having to drink lots of fluid to help with the return to Earth give the trip texture and life. Engaging in detailing the level of preparation that the astronauts undergo, the book shows that they run through so many potential problem scenarios that nothing can surprise them.

The core philosophy of the Hernández family runs throughout: their five-step recipe for success. It includes charting a path to a goal, getting the education needed to achieve it, and working hard to exceed all expectations. Hernández adds a step to the recipe about not giving up: he had to apply to be an astronaut twelve times, and bettered his chances each time with new experiences and training. The story doesn't lean too heavily on its philosophy, but it still forms as a core takeaway for anyone with their own lofty goals, inspiring them, too, to achieve their dreams.

From Farmworker to Astronaut is an inspiring, hopeful memoir in which humble beginnings lead to an unforgettable, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

LAURA LEAVITT (November / December 2019)

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