Clarion Review

Autobiography & Memoir

From Foster Care to Fabulous: An Imperative Movement

Capri C. Cruz
AuthorHouse
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Four Stars (out of Five)

Indifferent and abusive foster families defined the childhood of Capri C. Cruz, but they did not keep her from serving in the United States Navy, becoming a mother, or getting a college education. Her inspirational message in *From Foster Care to Fabulous* goes out to those who have survived family separation and all types of childhood trauma.

Speaking in both the first and third person, Cruz offers both a memoir of her childhood and a motivational self-help book. She describes her years in a string of foster homes as being rarely nurturing, frequently harmful, and never permanent. Explicit about the childhood sexual abuse she experienced, Cruz acknowledges her suffering, but focuses on how she recovered, and how others can do the same.

Many readers will recognize the language of the "law of attraction" philosophy popularized by Rhonda Byrne's *The Secret* and its successors. Positive thinking is also a big part of Cruz's formula for happiness. For instance, she offers lists of affirmations such as "I am strong!" and "I am beautiful!" to counteract the negative messages learned in childhood. The vision boards familiar to Oprah Winfrey fans make an appearance here, as do self-esteem and goal-setting exercises. Unlike some positive-thinking enthusiasts, Cruz's emphasis on the forward-looking approach is tempered by a willingness to investigate the problems of the past, although she does not dwell there.

Cruz's strong Christian faith comes through in frequent biblical quotations, but her advice is not limited to one religion or philosophy. She also includes an Eastern perspective, with wisdom from Buddha and Lao-tzu appearing nearly as often as passages from the New Testament.

The steady stream of clichéd advice, including "Never let anyone take away your dream," and "Picture a better tomorrow," would become tiresome if Cruz didn't also include

details from her own life. When she describes spending sixteen years in the navy, raising a daughter by herself, and pursuing a doctorate in mental-health counseling, it is clear that her advice is based on her own hard-won experiences. Her successes may encourage others to achieve their own.

The final chapters of the book offer a series of tools for making dreams a reality. Cruz's work as a life coach is revealed in visualization and writing exercises that culminate in a customized flowchart for the future. She includes questionnaires, blank forms, and reading suggestions in several appendices.

From Foster Care to Fabulous encourages self-inquiry, but also offers practical advice about how to set goals. For readers from all backgrounds, not just the foster-care system, the book offers an opportunity to create a step-by-step plan for getting more out of life.

Sheila M. Trask