



# CLAIMING HOME, SHAPING COMMUNITY

TESTIMONIOS DE LOS VALLES

EDITED BY GLORIA H. CUÁDRAZ AND YOLANDA FLORES

*Highlighting the transformative power of higher education and its impact on the working class*

To offer *testimonio* is inherently political, a vehicle that counters the hegemony of the state and illuminates the repression and denial of human rights. *Claiming Home, Shaping Community* offers the testimonios from and about the lives of Mexican-descent people who left rural agricultural valles, specifically the Imperial and the San Joaquín Valleys, to pursue higher education at a University of California campus.

While symbolically their journeys embody the master narrative of the “American Dream,” *Claiming Home, Shaping Community* does not echo the “rags to riches” trope reified in dominant culture, but rather, it asserts the need to rehumanize the purpose and heart of education. In each chapter, the narrators illustrate myriad supports that allowed them to move forward on their academic and professional journeys: hard work, affirmative action, inclusionary practices, mentors, and their communities’ cultural wealth. Each trajectory is unique, but put together as a collection, the commonalities emerge.

Denoting a sense of political and social urgency that responds to the current accentuated economic disparities between the have’s and the have-not’s, these essays illuminate the broader societal benefits of federal legislation and resources for state-funded public higher education and policies that broaden access and resources. Through telling their stories, the contributors to this volume seek to empower others on their journeys to and through higher education.

GLORIA H. CUÁDRAZ is an associate professor of sociology at Arizona State University. She is a member of the Latina Feminist Group, co-authors of *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios*.

YOLANDA FLORES is an associate professor at the University of Vermont. Her most recent book is *The Drama of Gender: Feminist Theater by Women of the Americas*.

*“All will be touched and inspired by these testimonios that demonstrate strength, resiliency, and how everything from hard work to affirmative action, mentors, and cultural wealth allowed these individuals to move forward on their academic and professional journeys.”*

—Dolores Delgado Bernal, co-author of *Transforming Educational Pathways for Chicana/o Students*

*“These narratives highlight the knowledge, skills, and critical social and political contributions that are further developed by and the result of access to higher education. As education disparities persist, it is critical that these testimonios be shared to provide models of paths toward success.”*

—Larissa M. Mercado-López, California State University, Fresno

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