



Color: Latino Voices in the Pacific Northwest

Lorane West

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Color presents a tapestry of poignant conversations with people who have come from various Central and South American cultures and backgrounds, all with the common thread of speaking the Spanish language. Their professions range from attorney to school bus driver. Some embrace the new culture of the United States; others merely tolerate it. Author Lorane West based her writing on exchanges she witnessed as a certified home health care worker and medical interpreter, and through her work at the Northwest Immigrants Rights Project. Her narratives give voice to hopes, dreams, and life experiences--from the ordinary to the overwhelmingly difficult. In Color, a young man who wants to be an auto mechanic cannot understand why he is required to take Psychology 101 at the local community college. "Tell me they're not doing it just to cheat the students out of even more money." A mother tells how as a little girl, she swept a dirt floor, cooked over a wood fire, and washed clothes in a muddy river. "Nothing was ever truly clean. It was endless and sad. Can you imagine being here, in a nice apartment, how fun it is for me to keep house.?" A man is unable to comprehend the poor work ethic of his fellow employees. "Minimum wage is more per hour than I would make at home by a long shot. So I work as hard as I can...but my citizen coworkers are always complaining. They even tell me not to work so hard because I make them look bad!" A father speaks of the intense hunger he experienced as a child and then recalls, "The first time my son said, 'I don't like this food,' I burst out crying. My wife thought I was upset at his bad manners, but I was just so glad my son had the luxury of not liking food...that my children have never known hunger." Whether about love, work, play, finances, or family, these accounts illuminate cultural differences in attitudes, rights, and values and pose intriguing questions about the effects of prosperity. West paints a very real picture of life for immigrants in the United States and, through her portraits, gives Americans a glimpse of themselves that may both surprise and challenge.

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