

10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
SOUTH TEXAS  
**B O O K**  
FESTIVAL

# Reading List 2023

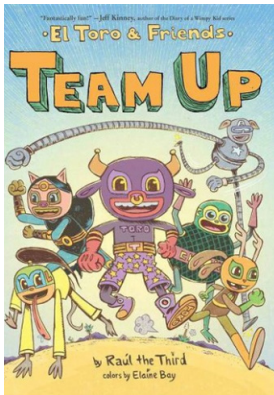


# CHILDREN'S BOOKS



**Spending the Day With My Grandma** by Cookie Carrales  
Illustrated by Rimpa Das

Spending the Day with Grandma is a delightful tale told by Maria 'Cookie' Carrales, new author and grandmother of ten wonderful grandchildren. Eva is a vibrant and gentle young girl. She is the center of her grandparents' world, and is delighted to spend the day playing, learning, and enjoying meal times, while staying at grandmas house

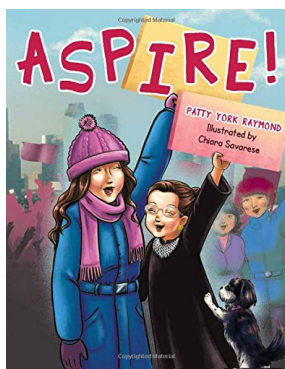


**El Toro & Friends: TEAM UP** by Raul the Third

El Toro and friends make a great team! But that wasn't always the case.

A long time ago, they went to Ricky Ratón's School of Lucha, learning everything from strength training to patience. When it comes time for one final test, El Toro and friends have to decide whether working alone is the best way to go or if teaming up might make things easier... and more fun!

Pairing Spanish phrases with plenty of humor, this early reader graphic novel is essential for those who want an action-packed story and lots of laughs



**Aspire** by Patty York Raymond

Aspire/Aspirar (hardcover) is a flip over book in English and Spanish.

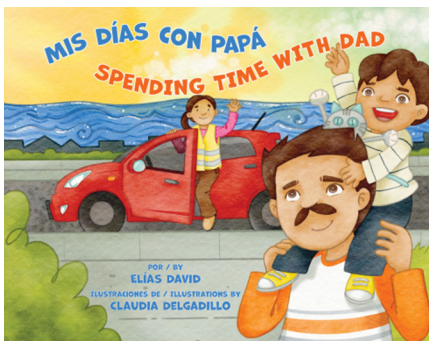
Join Jessica on her exciting weekend adventures. Witness some of the possibilities for her promising future as her mother reaffirms her daughter's positive character traits. "You're brilliant! You're inquisitive! You're strong!" says her mom. Observe Jessica's growing sense of autonomy and self-empowerment while she explores a variety of careers and occupations.

Find the original song, "Aspire," written for this book by Eddie Cavazos/Cavazos Music and Patty York Raymond, performed by Julissa Figueroa, on all music platforms.



**Marya Khan and the Incredible Henna Party** by Saadia Faruqi

Marya's eighth birthday is coming up in a week, and all she wants is an over-the-top birthday party just like the ones Alexa, her rich neighbor, always throws. When Alexa parades into school with fancy invitations, Marya can't help herself—she claims that she's having the most epic henna party ever. Now she has to convince her family to make it happen. Enter Operation Help the Khans! Marya's siblings clearly need help with their projects. Maybe she could cook dinner for her parents, or clean her grandmother's room? Except everything Marya does seems to end in disaster. Will Marya and her family be able pull it together and throw the best party ever?!



### **Mis Días con Papá / Spending Time with Dad** by Elias David

This sweet bilingual picture book follows a boy and his stay-at-home dad, who takes care of him while his mom goes to work at the port, “where huge cargo ships come and go every day.” She oversees the containers that go around the world! The boy recounts his days spending time with his father, from “when the sun starts filling the room with light,” to eating breakfast, brushing his teeth and talking to his grandparents who live in a different country. His favorite time of the day is when he gets to play with his dinosaurs and his friend Tato, a stuffed cat who joins him on all his adventures. When Mom comes home, the whole family goes to the park. After

dinner, he goes to bed and thinks about the ships from his mom’s work, his dinosaurs and his grandparents. Soon he falls asleep, hugging his special kitty.

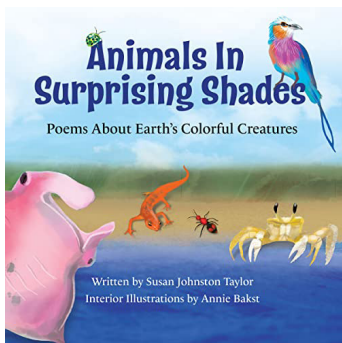


### **Just Help! How to Build a Better World** by Sonia Sotomayor, Illustrated by Angela Dominguez

Every night when Sonia goes to bed, Mami asks her the same question: How did you help today? And since Sonia wants to help her community, just like her Mami does, she always makes sure she has a good answer to Mami’s question.

In a story inspired by her own family’s desire to help others, Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor takes young readers on a journey through a neighborhood where kids and adults, activists and bus drivers, friends and strangers all help one another to build a better world for themselves and their community.

With art by award-winning illustrator Angela Dominguez, this book shows how we can all help make the world a better place each and every day.



### **Animals in Surprising Shades** • Poems About Earth’s Colorful Creatures by Susan Johnston Taylor

*Rosy pinks, regal blues, radiant greens  
Adorn birds, bugs, snails, slugs.  
Instead of paint on canvas,  
Nature colors feathers, fur, skin, scales.  
But if some see these creatures as  
Oddball or off-the-wall,  
Why not delight in their whimsy and wonder?*

For young poets who love science and young scientists who love poetry, this thoughtful collection of poems about fascinating and colorful creatures found throughout the world invites readers to linger and wonder on every page. Learn why the Blue-footed Booby puts on a special dance or how the Picasso Bug uses its masterful chemical defense against predators. Explore simple and fun poetic forms like the tanka, haiku, and quatrain. Just be sure to take good notes! An interactive component rewards practicing poets seeking to challenge themselves further.

With gorgeous illustrations and a rainbow of colors to complement the lyrical and engaging text, this book will fit nicely on the shelves of any classroom or library where kids are interested in science, writing or the arts.

## TWEEN BOOKS (AGES 8-12)



### **Miss Quinces** by Kat Fajardo

Sue just wants to spend the summer reading and making comics at sleepaway camp with her friends, but instead she gets stuck going to Honduras to visit relatives with her parents and two sisters. They live way out in the country, which means no texting, no cable, and no Internet! The trip takes a turn for the worse when Sue's mother announces that they'll be having a surprise quinceañera for Sue, which is the last thing she wants. She can't imagine wearing a big, floofy, colorful dress! What is Sue going to do? And how will she survive all this "quality" time with her rambunctious family?

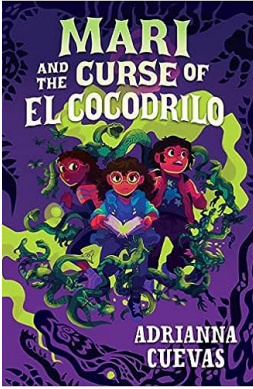


### **Saving Sunshine** by Saadia Faruqi

It's hard enough being a kid without being teased for a funny sounding name or wearing a hijab.

It's even harder when you're constantly fighting your sibling –and Zara and Zeeshan really can't stand each other. During a family trip to Florida, when the bickering, shoving, and insults reach new heights of chaos, their parents sentence them to the worst possible fate – each other's company! But when the twins find an ailing turtle, it presents a rare opportunity for teamwork – if the two can put their differences aside at last.

## TEEN BOOKS (AGES 13-18)



### ***Mari and the Curse of El Cocodrilo* by Adrianna Cuevas**

If Mari Feijoo could, she would turn her family's Peak Cubanity down a notch, just enough so that her snooping neighbor and classmate Mykenzye wouldn't have anything to tease her about. That's why this year, there's no way that Mari's joining in on one of the big-gest Feijoo family traditions—burning the New Year's Eve effigy her abuela makes. Only Mari never suspects that failing to toss her effigy in the fire would bring something much worse than sneering words at school: a curse of bad luck from El Cocodrilo. At first, it's just possessed violins and grade sabotaging pencils, but once El Cocodrilo learns that he becomes more powerful with each new misery, her luck goes from bad to nightmarish as the curse spreads to her friend Keisha. Instead of focusing on Mari's mariachi band tryout and Keisha's fencing tournament, the pair, along with their friend Juan Carlos, are racing against the clock to break the curse. But when Mari discovers her family's gift to call upon their ancestors, she and her friends will have to find a way to work with the unexpected help that arrives from the far corners of Mari's family tree. Only will it be enough to defeat El Cocodrilo before he makes their last year of elementary school the worst ever and tears their friendship apart?

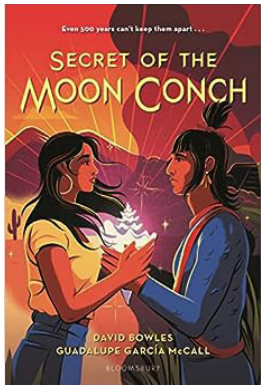


### ***A Fright to Remember (Monster High School Spirits #1)* by Adrianna Cuevas**

The Monster High ghouls are back and more spooktacular than ever in this all-new, original middle grade series set in the world of Nickelodeon's animated show and written by Adrianna Cuevas!

As Monster High prepares for its annual talent show, Frankie Stein is left wondering what they could perform. When Torelei Stripe mocks Frankie's music playing abilities, Frankie is left even more confused about which of their brain parts is exciting enough for the talent show.

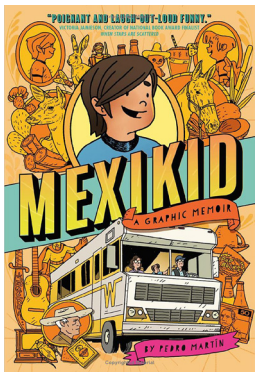
Luckily, Headmistress Bloodgood presents Frankie with new information about their brain that might hold the answer. Except Frankie discovers that their brain part is from a disgraced scientist accused of unethical experiments. Plagued by dreams from the scientist's life, Frankie teams up with Draculaura and Clawdeen to discover the truth about their past—and save Monster High in the process.



***Secret of the Moon Conch* by David Bowles & Guadalupe Garcia McCall**

It's hard enough being a kid without being teased for a funny sounding name or wearing a hijab.

It's even harder when you're constantly fighting your sibling –and Zara and Zeeshan really can't stand each other. During a family trip to Florida, when the bickering, shoving, and insults reach new heights of chaos, their parents sentence them to the worst possible fate – each other's company! But when the twins find an ailing turtle, it presents a rare opportunity for teamwork – if the two can put their differences aside at last.



***MexiKid A Graphic Memoir* by Pedro Martin**

Pedro Martin has grown up hearing stories about his abuelito—his legendary crime-fighting grandfather who was once a part of the Mexican Revolution! But that doesn't mean Pedro is excited at the news that Abuelito is coming to live with their family. After all, Pedro has 8 brothers and sisters and the house is crowded enough! Still, Pedro piles into the Winnebago with his family for a road trip to Mexico to bring Abuelito home, and what follows is the trip of a lifetime, one filled with laughs and heartache. Along the way, Pedro finally connects with his abuelito and learns what it means to grow up and find his grito.



***The Broke Hearts* by Matt Mendez**

A year after losing their best friend, JD and Danny are still brokenhearted. JD's impetuous decision to join the Air Force only makes him yearn for "before" more than ever. Danny, who'd rather paint murals than open a book and certainly never thought of himself as college material, makes the equally impulsive choice to do what Juan will never be able to and enrolls in a community college.

Danny's father, The Sarge, is proud of him for the first time ever for living out Sarge's own dream of being a first-generation college student, but Danny can't shake the thought that it should be Juan, not him. And studying hasn't gotten any easier for him despite his new academic goals. When Danny is on the verge of flunking out and JD gets notified of imminent deployment, the two are forced to confront their shared grief that led them to these paths. Can they learn to live lives that are their own in honor of Juan, rather than for him?



## **¡Ay, Mija! My Bilingual Summer in Mexico** by Christine Suggs

Sixteen-year-old Christine takes their first solo trip to Mexico to spend a few weeks with their grandparents and tía. At first, Christine struggles to connect with family they don't yet share a language with. Seeing the places their mom grew up—the school she went to, the café where she had her first date with their father—Christine becomes more and more aware of the generational differences in their family.

Soon Christine settles into life in Mexico, eating pan dulce, drawing what they see, and growing more comfortable with Spanish. But when Mom joins their trip, Christine's two worlds collide. They feel homesick for Texas, struggle against traditions, and miss being able to speak to their mom without translating. Eventually, through exploring the impacts of colonialism in both Mexico and themselves, they find their place in their family and start to feel comfortable with their mixed identity.

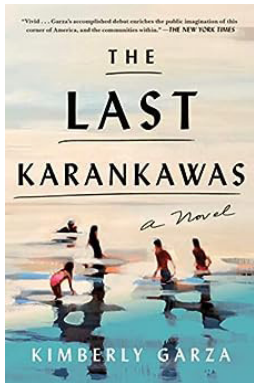


## **The Prince & The Coyote** by David Bowles

1418 - Pre-Columbian Mexico Fifteen-year old crown prince Acolmiztli wants nothing more than to see his city-state of Tetzco thrive. A singer, poet, and burgeoning philosophical mind, he has big plans about infrastructure projects and cultural initiatives that will bring honor to his family and help his people flourish. But the two sides of his family, the kingdoms of Mexico and Acolhuacan, have been at war his entire life – after his father risked the wrath of the Tepanec emperor to win his mother's love. When a power struggle leaves his father dead and his mother and siblings in exile, Acolmiztli must run for his life, seeking refuge in the wilderness. After a coyote helps him find his way in the wild, he takes on a new name – Nezahualcoyotl, or "fasting coyote" (" " for short). Biding his time until he can

form new alliances and reconnect with his family, Neza goes undercover, and falls in love with a commoner girl, Sekalli. Can Neza survive his plotting uncles' scheme to wipe out his line for good? Will the empire he dreams of in Tetzco ever come to life? And is he willing to risk the lives of those he loves in the process? This action-packed tale blends prose and poetry – including translations of surviving poems by Nezahualcoytl himself, translated from classical Nahuatl by the author. And the book is packed with queer rep – queer love stories, and a thoughtful of pre-columbian understandings of gender that defy the contemporary Western gender binary. From Pura Belpré honoree David Bowles comes a young adult epic about one of the greatest minds of the Americas (honored to this day on Mexico's 100-peso bill).

## ADULT BOOKS

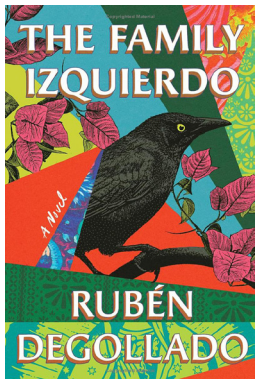


### ***The Last Karankawas* by Kimberly Garza**

Welcome to Galveston, Texas. Population 50,241.

Carly Castillo has only ever known Galveston. Her grandmother Magdalena claims that they descend from the Karankawas, an extinct indigenous Texan tribe, thereby tethering them to the land. Meanwhile, her boyfriend and all-star shortstop turned seaman, Jess, treasures the salty, familiar air. He's gotten chances to leave for bigger cities, but he didn't take them then and he sure as hell won't now. When word spreads of a storm gathering strength offshore known as Hurricane Ike, each Galveston resident must make a difficult decision: board up the windows and hunker down or flee inland and abandon their hard-won homes.

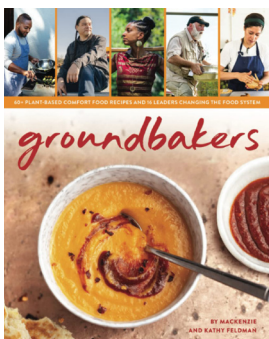
Moving through the extraordinary lives of these characters and the many individuals who circle them, *The Last Karankawas* weaves together a multitude of voices to present a lyrical, emotionally charged portrait of everyday survival. The result is an unforgettable exploration of familial inheritance, human resilience, and the histories we assign to ourselves.



### ***The Family Izquierdo* by Rubén Degollado**

A masterful debut that weaves together the lives of three generations of a Mexican American family bound by love, and a curse.

The tight-knit Izquierdo family is grappling with misfortunes none of them can explain. Their beloved patriarch has suffered from an emotional collapse and is dying; eldest son Gonzalo's marriage is falling apart; daughter Dina, beleaguered by the fear that her nightmares are real, is a shut-in. When Gonzalo digs up a strange object in the backyard of the family home, the Izquierdos take it as proof that a jealous neighbor has cursed them—could this be the reason for all their troubles? As the Izquierdos face a distressing present and an uncertain future, they are sustained by the blood that binds them, a divine presence, and an abiding love for one another. Told in a series of soulful voices brimming with warmth and humor, *The Family Izquierdo* is a tender narrative of a family at a turning point.

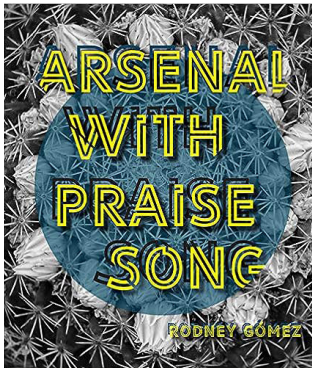


### ***Ground Bakers* by Mackenzie Feldman**

Mackenzie Feldman is the Founder and Project Director of Re:wild Your Campus, a project of Re:wild that empowers the next generation of environmental leaders to create safer, more sustainable living and learning environments for all, by starting locally and advocating for organic land care on their campuses. She is currently a Master's student at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, where she is studying Agroecology. Mackenzie is also a 2023 Walking Softer Young Leaders Awardee.

Website: [www.groundbakers.com](http://www.groundbakers.com)





## **Arsenal With Praise Song** by Rodney Gómez

*Winner of The Texas Institute of Letters' Helen C. Smith Memorial Award for Best Book of Poetry*

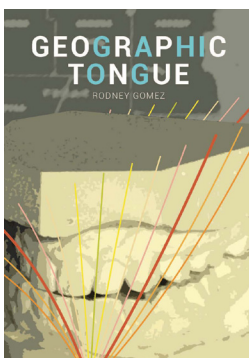
Rodney Gómez's *Arsenal With Praise Song* somehow manages to yoke together lament and celebration, reproach and veneration across the borders of eras and nations. Set in the stark desert landscape of the México-U.S. border all too familiar to so many refugees and migrants, these poems scrutinize human bodies and the body of the earth as the sites of great injustices and violences—political, social, and spiritual—and as the vehicles that carry our collective legacy generation to generation.



## **Cenzontle/Mockingbird: Songs of Empowerment (Poetry \* Drama)**

by Daniel García Ordaz

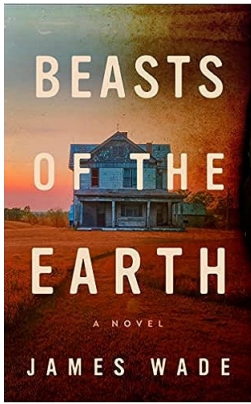
A code-switching collection of diverse poetic forms, styles, and personas celebrating the dynamics of the human voice & spirit. Daniel García Ordaz, the Poet Mariachi, the author of *You Know What I'm Sayin'?*, encourages readers to perform the text aloud, such as his adaptation of Shakespeare's "Romeo & Juliet." A polyglottic exhibition of empowerment through performance. Influenced by and dedicated to the memories of Maya Angelou and Gloria E. Anzaldúa.



## **Geographic Tongue** by Rodney Gómez

In *Geographic Tongue*, an important addition to the Pleiades Press Visual Poetry Series, Rodney Gomez weaves together themes of loss, identity, ethnicity, heritage, and the mechanics of contemporary life to create a collection as lyrically arresting as it is aesthetically stunning. These visual poems, crafted with both restraint and vitality, are visceral in their depiction of cruelty and grief at the United States–Mexico border. And yet, this charged landscape also gives rise to moments of tenderness, stillness, and wry humor. Gomez's visual design is at once vivid and haunting, drawing together collage, diagrams, and abstract imagery into a bright, geometrically precise collection. His text casts such a powerful spell that in its absence, silence is heard as clearly as any phrase. Gomez writes, "You don't have to speak to speak truth," and

this lucid assertion is borne out in the collection as a whole. In its art, and in its silence, the poems of *Geographic Tongue* are undeniably and indelibly authentic



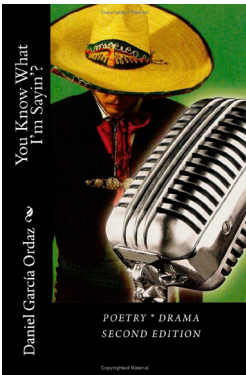
### ***Beasts of the Earth* by James Wade**

James Wade, whose first two novels were praised as “rhapsodic” and “haunting,” delivers his most powerful work to date--a chilling parable about the impossible demands of hate and love, trauma and goodness, vividly set in the landscapes of Texas and Louisiana.

*Beasts of the Earth* tells the story of Harlen LeBlanc, a dependable if quiet employee of the Carter Hills High School’s grounds department, whose carefully maintained routine is overthrown by an act of violence. As the town searches for answers, LeBlanc strikes out on his own to exonerate a friend, while drawing the eyes of the law to himself and fending off unwelcome voices that call for a sterner form of justice.

Twenty years earlier, young Michael Fischer dreads the return of his father from prison. He spends his days stealing from trap lines in the Louisiana bayou to feed his fanatically religious mother and his cherished younger sister, Doreen. When his father eventually returns, an evil arrives in Michael’s life that sends him running from everything he has ever known. He is rescued by a dying poet and his lover, who extract from him a promise: to be a good man, whatever that may require.

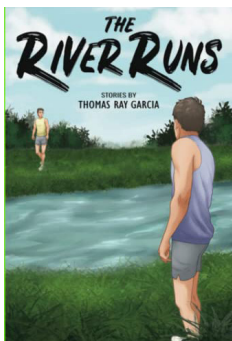
*Beasts of the Earth* deftly intertwines these stories, exploring themes of time, fate, and free will, to produce a revelatory conclusion that is both beautiful and heartbreaking.



### ***You Know What I’m Sayin’?* by Daniel Garcia Ordaz**

El Zarape Press presents its first collection of poetry by the eclectic Daniel García Ordaz, The Poet Mariachi, “the voice of the Rio Grande Valley” (Texas), an emerging voice in Latino and Hispanic American poetry. *You Know What I’m Sayin’?* is a celebration of the common experience of language and culture transfiguring time and place and juxtaposing the politics of urban hip-hop America with the lyricism of rural deep South Texas, a retelling of ancient history sung by a contemporary Chicano voice. With an introduction by Fulbright Scholar Dr. Debbie Cole, a linguistic anthropologist. Mainly English; some bilingual (English/Spanish) pieces. This book is being taught at university and high school campuses across the U.S., especially by linguistics professors and those seeking diverse new voices to connect with

young Hispanic, Latino, Chicano readers. The first half of the book is very American-experience based; the second half has a more Mexican American experience flavor to it. The middle of the book has a monologue and a “Play On Words” that’s meant to be enjoyed read though may be acted out: it’s about preconceived notions and about how we hear and perceive communication

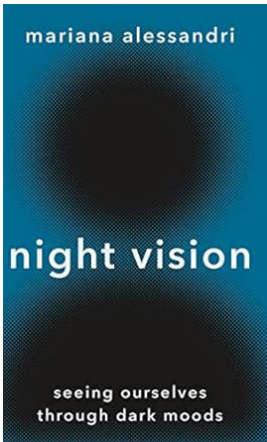


### ***The River Runs* by Thomas Ray Garcia**

Thomas Ray Garcia’s debut short story collection presents revitalized insights into the Texas-Mexico border region. *The River Runs* resists a singular vision of the border, centering the Rio Grande as a site of belonging and becoming. These 11 stories feature characters facing the internal and external realities of living alongside a river running through their countries, communities, and cultures.

Here, river crossings lead to cross country runs and astral projections. A pregnant teenager learns about motherhood from a curandera. A scholarship boy grapples with his fronterizo identity. The sister of a border patrol agent lives in fear of deportation. A child looks into the eye of a drone and sees his family anew.

*The River Runs: Stories* won the Américo Paredes Literary Arts Prize for Fiction sponsored by FlowerSong Press from McAllen, Texas and Prickly Pear Publishing from Santa Fe, New Mexico.



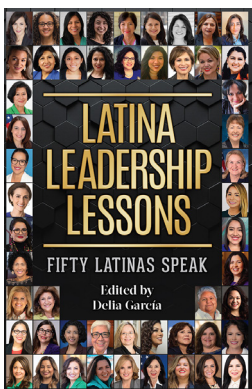
## **Night Vision** by Mariana Alessandri

*A philosopher's personal meditation on how painful emotions can reveal truths about what it means to be truly human*

Under the light of ancient Western philosophies, our darker moods like grief, anguish, and depression can seem irrational. When viewed through the lens of modern psychology, they can even look like mental disorders. The self-help industry, determined to sell us the promise of a brighter future, can sometimes leave us feeling ashamed that we are not more grateful, happy, or optimistic. *Night Vision* invites us to consider a different approach to life, one in which we stop feeling bad about feeling bad.

In this powerful and disarmingly intimate book, Existentialist philosopher Mariana Alessandri draws on the stories of a diverse group of nineteenth- and twentieth-century philosophers and writers to help us see that our suffering is a sign not that we are broken but that we are tender, perceptive, and intelligent. Thinkers such as Audre Lorde, María Lugones, Miguel de Unamuno, C. S. Lewis, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Søren Kierkegaard sat in their anger, sadness, and anxiety until their eyes adjusted to the dark. Alessandri explains how readers can cultivate "night vision" and discover new sides to their painful moods, such as wit and humor, closeness and warmth, and connection and clarity.

*Night Vision* shows how, when we learn to embrace the dark, we begin to see these moods and ourselves as honorable, dignified, and unmistakably human.



## **Latina Leadership Lessons** Edited by Delia Garcia

The Honorable Delia García exhibited her leadership skills at the age of 13, when she organized the first Youth American GI Forum Chapter in Wichita, Kansas, where she was born and raised. She went on to become the first Latina-and youngest woman-elected to the Kansas legislature in 2004 and the first Latina appointed Secretary of Labor in her home state. The recipient of numerous awards and accolades, García gathers "Top Ten Leadership Lessons" from 50 high-achieving women. This "who's who" of movers-and-shakers contains representatives from government, corporate and non-profit worlds. While each woman's unique experiences and heritage are reflected in her advice, there are several recommendations that made many of the lists, such as the importance of believing in oneself, the need to mentor and be mentored, remembering one's roots, embracing change and taking care of one's physical and emotional needs. Contributors come from every region of the country, and include Dr. Victoria M. DeFrancesco Soto, the dean of the Clinton School of Public Service at the University of Arkansas, a contributor to NBC News and a political analyst for Telemundo; the Honorable Carmen Yulín Cruz Soto, the former mayor of San Juan, Puerto Rico, who dealt with the devastating aftermath of Hurricane María; the Honorable Hilda Solis, former US Secretary of Labor and California state senator and congresswoman; and María "Gaby" Pacheco, a young immigrant rights advocate who spearheaded the efforts that led to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. This powerful and intriguing collection introduces an impressive group of women who have reached the pinnacle of success in their work, despite having to overcome obstacles related to gender, ethnicity and sometimes immigration status.