

Chingona: Owning Your Inner Badass for Healing and Justice

Alma Zaragoza-Petty

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In *Chingona*, Alma Zaragoza-Petty's life story intertwines with compelling advice that strikes at the heart of Latina women's needs to claim the strongest parts of their identities.

In her childhood, Zaragoza-Petty was often called a "chingona," or an unruly, rebellious girl. It was an undesirable box to be put in. But as she grew up—succeeding in school and becoming not only the first in her family to graduate high school but also the first to attend college and earn a PhD—she realized that being a chingona was her greatest asset. Her book is a manifesto, both an analysis and a public service announcement about American culture and its pressures on women of color to assimilate despite feeling unwanted and undervalued.

The narrative merges elements of a memoir with those of a self-help manual, isolating significant moments from Zaragoza-Petty's life and extrapolating powerful meanings that are applicable to all. This work is vulnerable, and its unflinching rawness makes it inspiring and authentic. Stories of Zaragoza-Petty's international separation from her mother in her youth, teenage gang activity, and disjuncture from herself to fit in with the white American workplace are a moving rallying cry against the fear of not belonging.

The book's assertive language pulses with honesty and authority, urging women of color to stop being complicit in society's expectations for them. Intellectual analyses delve into how living in the contexts of culture and family result in strains, but also offer opportunities to subvert historical attitudes. There are poignant arguments for assessing "what we are being socialized *into*" and redefining ourselves for the future.

In telling her own story, Alma Zaragoza-Petty energizes others to own, celebrate, and embody the truths of their own personalities, histories, and beliefs.

AIMÉE JODOIN (November / December 2022)

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